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TWENTY-FOUR

SERMONS

PREACH'D at the

Parish Church of St. *Mary le Bow, London,*

In the YEARS 1739, 1740, 1741,

AT THE

LECTURE

Founded by the Honourable

ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;

AND

Eight SERMONS

PREACH'D at the

CATHEDRAL CHURCH of St. *PAUL,*

In the YEARS 1738 and 1739,

AT THE

LECTURE

Founded by the Honoured

Lady *MOYER.*

To which are Added,

A VISITATION SERMON, *a* SERMON *before the* RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES, *and a* CHARITY SERMON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By *LEONARD TWELLS,* D. D.

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SERMON I.

ISAIAH vii. 14.

The Lord himſelf ſhall give you a Sign. Behold a Virgin ſhall conceive and bear a Son, and ſhall call his Name Immanuel.

MOST, if not all the Prophecies I have hitherto explained and defended, as rationally and pertinently applied to Chriſt out of the Old Teſtament, by the Writers of the New, have been ſuch as thoſe Writers built upon, and argued from, to convince the *Jews* of the Truth of Chriſtianity in general, or of that fundamental and firſt Article thereof, that Jeſus is the Meſſiah foretold by the Law and the Prophets.

But this before us, tho' expreſsly declared to have been fulfilled in the Birth of Jeſus, by St. *Matthew*, in the firſt Chapter of his Goſpel, is not argued from by that Evangeliſt, or by any other ſacred Writer; but upon the Authority of his inſpired Character, is affirmed to have had its Completion in the miraculous Birth of our bleſſed Saviour. The direct Way therefore of Inquiry into the Truth or Falſehood of this Application, is to examine the Validity of St. *Matthew*'s Claim to Inſpiration. If he certainly wrote by the Direction of that very bleſſed Spirit, who dictated the Prophecy in the Text, there is no Room for queſtioning the Truth and Pertinency of the Completion aſſigned by him thereto: For the holy Spirit of God muſt have known the Views of his own Predictions, and would not permit any one, that wrote by his Direction, to miſunderſtand, or to miſreport them.

But however neceſſary a Recourſe to this Principle may be, when the Terms of a Pre-

Prediction do not evidently correſpond with the Event aſſigned thereto by ſacred Writers, the Prophecy in the Text, as applied by St. *Matthew*, needs not ſuch a Method of Defence, but will ſtand on its own Bottom, having been literally compleated in the Birth of Jeſus, and in that of no other Birth whatever: For in no other, ſave the miraculous Birth of our bleſſed Lord, did *a Virgin conceive and bear a Son*, either among the Deſcendents from *David*, or, as far as we know, from any other Patriarch whatever.

Whether, therefore, the Words of *Iſaiah* had another, and an earlier, tho' leſs proper and full Completion in the Prophet's Son or not; whether the Birth of Jeſus was an Event ſuitable or not to the Occaſion of the Prophecy in the Text, it was moſt certainly and exactly fulfilled in that miraculous Incident. And will the *Jews* allow it morally poſſible, that ſuch a Thing could be effected by the extraordinary Interpoſition of divine Power, without being intended in the giving forth of

the Prophecy? We grant there may be ſuch Things as accidental Coincidencies of Events with Prophecies that had no Reſpect to ſuch Events, tho' this is but barely conceivable, and is highly unlikely; but that God ſhould create a new Thing upon Earth, and ſend a great Prophet into the World by a Birth without the ordinary Means of a human Father; that he ſhould, through all the Annals of Time, have but once violated the Courſe of Nature in this Manner, exactly as he foretold it ſhould happen eight hundred Years before, and yet not intend therein to compleat that Prediction; is harder to credit, and to be reconciled with the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, than any Chriſtian Myſtery whatever. And yet this high Improbability, or rather Abſurdity, muſt they maintain, whether they be *Jews* or *Deiſts*, who charge St. *Matthew* with impertinently applying the Prophecy of the Text to the Birth of Jeſus our Saviour.

As to the latter Part of this Prediction, which concerns the Name of this wonderful

ful Son of a Virgin Mother, it was not, we confeſs, fulfilled in Jeſus according to the Letter; he was never, that we can learn, called *Immanuel:* No more was *Iſaiah*'s Son, whom ſome will have to be the immediate Subject of the Prophecy before us; nor was that Son of *Iſaiah*, in any tolerable Sort, what the Name *Immanuel* implies, *i. e.* God with us. After his Birth, and the prophetick Significancy of it, which came to paſs in two Years after, we hear nothing more concerning this Son of the Propheteſs; he wrought no Wonders nor Deliverances, either for the Kingdom of *Judah*, or Houſe of *David*, on Account whereof the Name *Immanuel*, in the loweſt Senſe of the Word, might be applicable to him, but is paſſed over in Silence like other common Men: Whereas Jeſus Chriſt, not only in the Wonders of his Birth, but in the future Tranſactions of his Life manifeſted, that God was with, or had viſited his People. The divine Power did never ſo viſibly, and in ſo ſhort a Time, exert itſelf before: For our Lord, in the three Years which

followed his ſhewing unto *Iſrael*, wrought more Wonders by the Finger of God, than had been performed throughout the *Jewiſh* Hiſtory, from the firſt Foundation of that People, which was a Term of one Thouſand five Hundred Years. The Wiſdom alſo and Goodneſs of God did not leſs eminently ſhine forth in him, than his Power did, and all together manifeſted him to be the Brightneſs of his Father's Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon: He therefore, and he only, was, in the ſublimeſt and moſt ſtrict Senſe, God with us, or God with our Nature, made in the Form and Faſhion of a Man. Can it then be imagined or conceived, that God ſhould, by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, foretell ſuch amazing Diſpenſations as theſe, and exactly verify them in the Birth and Life of Jeſus, and mean nothing of all this by it, but ſomething elſe, which, if at all brought to paſs, fell infinitely ſhort of the Terms in which the Prophecy was couched? Can *Jews*, that are not blinded by Prejudices, or rather judicial Deluſion, ſtand out againſt ſuch cogent Evidence for the Truth of the Goſpel,

Goſpel, as this is? Nay, can even Deiſts, who allow the neceſſary Perfections, as well as the Being of God, ward off the Conſequences of this Prophecy ſo illuſtriouſly compleated? None ſure but Atheiſts or Fataliſts, who ſuppoſe both Prophecies, and Completions of them, to be the Work of blind Chance or Deſtiny, can conſiſtently maintain, that St. *Matthew* has falſely applied the Prediction in the Text to the Nativity of the bleſſed Jeſus.

In a Word therefore, whether we can or cannot make out the Pertinence of the Sign given to the Houſe of *David*, in the Words of *Iſaiah* now before us, thus underſtood, to the Occaſion upon which it was given, *viz.* the Confederacy of the two Kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael*, againſt the reigning Family in *Judah*; St. *Matthew*'s Interpretation of it, as built upon the Truth and Goodneſs of God, as well as the natural Congruity of it, muſt ſtand impregnable againſt all but Atheiſts.

However, the learned Advocates for Chriſtianity have offered a plauſible Rationale of this Matter; and the Exceptions taken to it by the Writers for Infidelity, when fairly conſidered, will be found to labour under the Charge either of Falſehood or Impertinence, or both.

A learned Prelate of our own has defended St. *Matthew*'s Application of the Text, on Suppoſition of its being a typical, or a ſingle literal Prediction of the Birth of Jeſus.

In the former Caſe, he ſuppoſes this miraculous Nativity to have been foretold in the Perſon of *Iſaiah*'s Son by the Prophetеſs, and in this Suppoſition he affirms there is nothing incongruous or unnatural, but that it may nevertheleſs, with Certainty, be applied to Chriſt; becauſe literally, and in the Amplitude of the Expreſſed, it was fulfilled in him only; whereas in the Type, the Words were figuratively and incompletely verified.

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In the latter Caſe, and taking the Words of *Iſaiah* in the Text to relate ſolely to Meſſias, he ſuppoſes the Prophecy concerning him, to end with the Verſe after the Text, and that the 16th Verſe begins a new Promiſe or Prophecy, in which neither Meſſias, nor the Son of *Iſaiah* by the Propheteſs, then unborn, was concerned, but his eldeſt Son by her, *Shear Jaſhub*, who was then with him at his Meeting with *Ahaz* by God's Appointment; he ſuppoſes that, pointing to this *Shear Jaſhub*, he pronounced the Words of the 16th Verſe. *For before the Child*, meaning the Child then in his Hand, *ſhall know to refuſe the Evil and chuſe the Good, the Land that thou abhorreſt ſhall be forſaken of both her Kings.* Here therefore, according to our Author, were two Promiſes of Security; Firſt, to the Houſe of *David* in general, by the Aſſurance that God's Covenant with that Patriarch, ſhould certainly be fulfilled by the wonderful Birth of him who was to ſit upon his Throne: And Secondly, of a perſonal Deliverance to *Ahaz*, from

from the Invaſion wherewith he was threatened, the Cauſe of which ſhould be removed, by the Death of the Invaders, before *Shear Jaſhub* ſhould be of Age to diſtinguiſh Good from Evil.

Againſt this Hypotheſis, what is it that the Enemies of Chriſtianity have to offer, that has any Appearance of Seriouſneſs or Importance? For with the Cavils and Sneers of thoſe Scorners, it will not be expected I ſhould meddle.

Why, firſt, we are told, that the preſent Fears of *Ahaz*, upon the Invaſion of the two Kings, was the Occaſion of the Sign given by the Prophet; and that in this View, the immediate Conception of a Male Child ſeems as proper a Sign to *Ahaz*, as the Conception of a Male Child eight hundred Years after was improper.

But to this it may be anſwered, that the Time of Meſſiah's Birth and Advent, does not appear to have been known when the Prophecy of the Text was given out, it never having been revealed to any preciſe

cise Degree, till the Days of *Daniel*; and of this the Writer, to whom I am now replying, was told by his Antagonist before he made this Objection: So that the miraculous Conception of Messiah might, for aught *Ahaz* knew, be near enough to be no improper Sign of Delivery from the Terrors then in his View. But supposing it to be otherwise, does not the Hypothesis I defend provide against this Inconvenience, by making *Shear Jashub*, who was then born, and also present, a Sign of Security to *Ahaz*, against the Confederacy which then threatened both him and his Family? Besides, there is a greater Likelihood, that *Shear Jashub* was the Sign of immediate Deliverance, because, otherwise it will scarce be possible to assign a Cause, why *Isaiah* was commanded by God to take that Child with him to this Interview with *Ahaz*. Some Design there was certainly in that Appointment, and what so likely a one, as that he might be a Sign of Security to the House of *David* from their present Apprehensions.

It must not be concealed, that our Adversary affirms, that tho' *Shear Jashub* accom-

panied his Father by the expreſs Command of God on his firſt Application to *Ahaz*, yet no ſuch Command accompanied this ſecond Application, of which we are treating; nor is it intimated, that *Shear Jaſhub* did then accompany his Father, and conſequently there is no Pretence for breaking the Prophecy into two, and for making *Iſaiah* point to *Shear Jaſhub* as a Party to the Promiſe in the 16th Verſe.

But here we altogether deny, that two diſtinct Applications to *Ahaz* are ſpoken of in the Chapter of the Text, the ſecond taking Place at the 10th Verſe; and conſequently *Shear Jaſhub* accompanied his Father when he uttered the Words in the 16th Verſe, and might be pointed to as the Child then ſpoken of. For it would be very abrupt, and little leſs than abſurd, to make the ſecond Application of *Iſaiah* to *Ahaz*, begin as the 10th Verſe does, with Offers of a Sign, in Confirmation of what had been foretold at a former Interview, unleſs he had repeated the Prediction, which is not pretended to have been done. Beſides, the Foundation upon which

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our Adverſary builds his Hypotheſis of two Applications, made at different Times to *Ahab* in the Chapter of the Text, will by no Means ſupport it: For it reſolves, at laſt, into no more than the equivocal Expreſſion of our *Engliſh* Bible, in the 10th Verſe, which runs thus; *Moreover, the Lord ſpake again unto* Ahaz, *ſaying*. But will this warrant any one to affirm, that this was a Meſſage delivered to *Ahaz*, at a diſtinct Time from that which preceded it? No ſurely. If the Writer in queſtion had looked into the Margin of his Bible, he would have found another, and a more literal Rendering, *viz. And the Lord added to ſpeak unto* Ahab; which ſurely is not only conſiſtent with its being a Continuation of the ſame Diſcourſe, but ſuppoſes it to be ſuch. If this had ſeemed too ſervile for the Text, the Tranſlators might have uſed the Turn they give to the very ſame Words in the Original, *Deut. Chap.* xx. *Ver.* 8. and have expreſſed it thus; *And the Lord ſpake further unto* Ahab, *ſaying*. Nay, I ſee not what Ground there would have been for blaming them, if they had put it, and the Lord *continued* or *proceed-*

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ed to ſpeak unto *Ahaz*, ſaying; any more than we do their Rendering in the 29th and 36th Chapters of *Job*, the former of which they make to begin thus; *Moreover* Job *continued his Parable, and ſaid*; and the latter, *Elihu alſo proceeded and ſaid:* Tho' in both theſe Paſſages, as in the 10th Verſe of the Chapter of the Text, the Letter of the *Hebrew* is, *added to take his Parable*, and *added to ſay*. Upon the Whole then, we find that the 10th Verſe was not the Beginning of a new Application to *Ahaz*, but a Continuation of what went before, and delivered at one and the ſame Time with it: And that the Miſtake of our Adverſary, if it was not wilful, was chargeable upon his Ignorance or Inattention. So that *Shear Jaſhub*, who accompanied his Father throughout his Interview with *Ahaz*, was with him when he delivered what we read in the 16th Verſe, and therefore might be there pointed to according to the Hypotheſis I am defending.

It is urged again, from the ſame Quarter, that *Iſaiah* could not point to *Shear Jaſhub*

Jaſhub and ſay, *Before he*, viz. Shear Jaſhub, *ſhould know to refuſe the Evil and chuſe the Good, the Land ſhould be forſaken of both her Kings*; becauſe *Shear Jaſhub* was at that Time of Age to make ſuch Diſtinction, and probably of Years of Diſcretion.

But what Authority can be produced, to prove this adult Age of *Shear Jaſhub*, at the Time the Prediction of the Text was given? All that appears, is the advanced Age of the Prophet, which indeed will evince, that he might have a Son then at Years of Diſcretion, but not that he certainly and actually had ſuch a Son. All his elder Children might be dead, and *Shear Jaſhub*, who alone was left to him, might be then an Infant in Arms, or juſt on his Feet, and able to walk in his Father's Hand. And that this was really the Caſe, we have ſome Reaſon to conclude from his Name, which, according to the LXX and *Jerom*, was only *Jaſhub Shear*, they both agreed in rendering participially: And where our *Engliſh* Bible, in the third Verſe

Verſe of the Chapter of the Text, makes God ſay to *Iſaiah*, *Go forth now to meet* Ahab, *thou, and* Shear Jaſhub *thy Son*; thoſe ancient Interpreters make him ſay, thou, and *Jaſhub* thy Son, that is left to thee. Another, and a conſiderable Advantage ariſing to us from this Interpretation is, that admitting it to be true, *Jaſhub* was never a Sign unto the *Jews*, if we exclude him from being ſuch in the 16th Verſe of the Chapter of the Text. But *Iſaiah* himſelf, in the following Chapter, at the 18th Verſe, aſſures us, *that he, and the Children whom the Lord hath given him, are for Signs, and for Wonders in* Iſrael. Now we know, that his younger Son *Maher-Shalal-Haſh-baz*, is ſpoken of as a Sign in the 4th Verſe of this Chapter: But where to find *Jaſhub* a Sign or a Wonder in *Iſrael*, if he was not pointed out for ſuch in the 16th Verſe of the 7th Chapter, I ſee not. *Grotius*, indeed, makes him to be a Sign by Virtue of his prophetick Name, which, with our *Engliſh*, and moſt other Interpreters, he will have to be at large *Shear Jaſhub*; which being, by Interpretation, the Rem-

Remnant ſhall return, is ſuppoſed to have preſignified the Return of thoſe *Jews*, which the Kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael* had carried away Captives, in an Invaſion they ſeparately made upon *Judea* two or three Years before, which accordingly happened ſoon after. But by this Account, the Birth of *Shear Jaſhub* muſt have fallen out during, or elſe immediately after, that Invaſion, and conſequently he was but in the ſecond or third Year of his Age, when he accompanied his Father to go and meet *Ahaz*, and to deliver the Prophecy of the Text. On either Suppoſition, therefore, our preſent Point is ſecure, that *Shear Jaſhub* was then far from being at Years of Diſcretion, and conſequently might be the Perſon meant or pointed to in the 16th Verſe, *before whoſe knowing to refuſe the Evil and chuſe the Good, the Land would be forſaken of both her Kings.*

Another Objection againſt the Completion of the Prophecy of the Text in the Birth of Jeſus, as we find it applied by St. *Matthew*, is, that the Virgin *Mary*, his

Mother, does not appear to have been of the Line of *David*, but rather of ſome Line in the Tribe of *Levi*; and that Jeſus could not be of the Line of *David*, as deſcended from her, ſeems plain, ſince St. *Matthew* makes him to be of the Line of *David*, only on Account of *Joſeph*, who was not his Father, and at the Time of Jeſus's Birth, only betrothed to the Virgin *Mary* (which ſhould ſeem an extraordinary Method of proceeding in St. *Matthew*, if Jeſus had been of the Line of *David* by *Mary*) and ſince the *Jews* never reckoned Families by Females.

Here our Adverſary condeſcends to reaſon againſt a Fact atteſted to by Prophets, Evangeliſts, and Apoſtles, who lived in the very Age of it, and all agree, that Jeſus was the Son, the Seed of *David*, and the Fruit of his Loins. His Proofs are old, and impertinent Cavils, which have been frequently detected and anſwered. The learned *Grotius* in particular, to whoſe Writings our Man was no Stranger, has ſhewn that *Mary*'s Kindred with

Elizabeth, who was one of the Daughters of *Aaron*, does not prove her (*i. e.*) *Mary*) to have been of that Family; ſeeing that this Conſanguinity was probably owing to *Mary*'s Father, or Grandfather's having married a Levitical Virgin. He has alſo accounted for *Mary*'s Pedigree not being deduced from *David*, but rather *Joſeph*'s; by ſhewing that Heireſſes, according to the Levitical Law, were obliged to marry to their neareſt Kindred by their Father. This, therefore, being the Caſe of the bleſſed Virgin, her's and *Joſeph*'s Pedigree muſt have been one and the ſame; ſo that the Proof of *Joſeph*'s Deſcent from *David*, included likewiſe that of *Mary*'s Deſcent from him. His laſt Pretence, that Jeſus could not be of the Line of *David*, as deſcended from *Mary*, becauſe the *Jews* never reckoned Families by Females, is a mere Equivocation. For the Birth of Jeſus, without a human Father, was a ſingular Caſe, in which his immediate Deſcent muſt take its firſt Riſe from a Female; and tho' ſuch a Reckoning may be againſt the ordinary Rules of *Jew-*

iſh Genealogy, it is agreeable to Nature; and therefore Jeſus was undoubtedly of the Line of *David*, becauſe his Mother was ſo.

The laſt material Objection urged againſt St. *Matthew*'s Application of the Prophecy in the Text is, that the Term in *Hebrew* tranſlated a Virgin, has not that preciſe Meaning, but ſignifies only in general a young Woman.

But what Proof, what Authority does he produce for the general Signification of the *Hebrew* Word *Alemah*? Does he find, that it ever ſignifies a young Woman, who was not a Virgin, in all the *Hebrew* Scriptures? No: For there, in ſeven Paſſages, which are all in which it occurs, it conſtantly ſignifies a Virgin. Does he give us the Authority of early Interpreters, who, living before Chriſt, might be ſuppoſed void of all Prejudices for or againſt the Cauſe of the Goſpel? No; this was impoſſible: Becauſe the *Seventy*, as they are called, or the oldeſt *Greek* Tranſlators, who lived

three hundred Years before Chriſt, and are the only diſintereſted Judges in the preſent Caſe, render the *Hebrew Alemah* by *Virgin*, juſt as all *Chriſtian* Interpreters do. In ſhort, therefore, we have only this Infidel Writer's Word for the Aſſertion, that *Alemah* ſignifies only in general a young Woman, whether ſhe be a Virgin or not. He knew that *Aquila*, *Symmachus*, and *Theodotion*, had given the ſame lax Turn to that Word, but was aſhamed to produce ſuch Vouchers; becauſe they were *Jews* or Jewiſhly inclined, who tranſlated the *Hebrew* Scriptures after Chriſt, and merely to ſerve the Purpoſes of a Party.

Thus it appears, after all the iniquitous Pains taken by the Enemies of our holy Faith to deprive us of the Evidence for it, from the illuſtrious Completion of the Prophecy before us, in the Birth of Jeſus our Lord, that it was truly and ſtrictly fulfilled by that Event. For *Mary* was the only Virgin Mother recorded in all the Annals of Time, ſince the giving forth of that Pro-

Prophecy, and her bleſſed Son, the only Male Child in all that Period, who could juſtly claim the Title of *Immanuel*, or God, with us.

Of the Strength and Pertinency of this Prediction, none ſeem more ſenſible than our Adverſaries themſelves. And, I think, they virtually confeſs as much, by the ſtrenuous Endeavours of late uſed by them to prove the ſpuriouſneſs of the two firſt Chaters in the preſent Goſpel of St. *Matthew*. And tho' their chief Spite is at the former of theſe two, becauſe therein is applied the formidable Prophecy of the Text, and the Hiſtory of *Mary*'s Virgin Pregnancy is there ſet down, yet they are forced to extend their Cenſure to the ſecond Chapter alſo; becauſe their chief Evidence is, that both were wanting in the Goſpel of the *Ebionites*, which they give out was the original *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew*. If this had not been the Caſe, the ſecond Chapter of St. *Matthew* would certainly have eſcaped their Cenſure; becauſe it contains two Prophecies, which they have made much Uſe of,

of, in order to depreciate the Evidence for Chriſtianity from that Topick. That ſame Chapter alſo contains the Hiſtory of *Herod*'s Murder of the *Bethlehemite* Infants; on which they deſcant with great Airs of Confidence, as a falſe Fact, utterly unſupported by all concurrent Hiſtorians: So that their Willingneſs to give up this ſecond Chapter-tho' with the Loſs of ſo many Handles for Cavil, is to be reſolved into no other Motive than this, that they cannot otherwiſe have a Pretence for expunging the firſt Chapter: And the firſt Chapter, tho' the Genealogy ſet down in it is very opportune for their Purpoſe, of playing one Goſpel againſt another, becomes inſupportable to them; becauſe the Evangeliſt therein applies a Prophecy, as fulfilled in the Birth of our Lord, which their utmoſt Skill and Malice is not, bleſſed be God for it, able to defeat.

SERMON II.

MICAH v. 2.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the Thouſands of Juda, yet out of thee ſhall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler of Iſrael: Whoſe goings forth have been of Old, from Everlaſting.

THIS Prophecy is not applied expreſly to the Birth of Chriſt, by Jeſus himſelf, nor by any of the New Teſtament Writers: But, as St. *Matthew* relates, it was ſo applied by the Chief Prieſts and Scribes of the People, in their Anſwer to *Herod*'s Queſtion, who convened them, demanding to know, where Chriſt ſhould

ſhould be born. The Evangeliſt tell us of no Difference in the Opinions of the *Sanhedrim*, upon the Queſtion put to them, but ſeems to make them anſwer unanimouſly, *In* Bethlehem *of* Judea: For thus it is written by the Prophet. *And thou Bethlehem, in the Land of Judah, art not the leaſt among the Princes of Judah: For out of thee ſhall come a Governor that ſhall rule my People Iſrael.* As therefore the ſacred Writers have neither expreſly cited, nor urged this Prophecy in Favour of Jeſus: So it ſhould ſeem not greatly to concern the Merits of the Chriſtian Cauſe, whether the *Jewiſh Sanhedrim* made a pertinent Application of the Prophecy in the Text to the Birth of Meſſias, or not. For admitting them to have made a wrong Judgment in this Caſe, St. *Matthew* is not neceſſarily concerned in this Affair, further than as a Relator of the Fact. The Unbelievers therefore, on no Suppoſition whatever, have any Right to ſay of the Prophecy before us, as they do of ſome others, that it is weakly alledged from the Old Teſtament in the Writings of the New, to ſupport the Pretenſions of

Jeſus

Jeſus to the Meſſiahſhip. However, as St. *Matthew* relates, the Application of this Prophecy to the Place of Chriſt's Nativity, without the leaſt Intimation that the Chief Prieſts and Scribes of the People erred in that Point; and as ſome Exceptions have been made to the Pertinency of the Allegation in the Text, tho' the Event has moſt exactly and wonderfully anſwered thereto; I have thought it by no Means foreign to the Scheme I have hitherto purſued in theſe Lectures, to defend the Propriety of this Prediction, and to ſhew its Importance to the Chriſtian Cauſe, againſt the unjuſt Exceptions of the unbelieving Writer, ſo oft ſpoken of in the Courſe of the Argument before us. And this in the following Method.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew, that Meſſiah's native Place is a Subject better ſuited to the Letter of this Prediction, than any other that has been aſſigned.

Secondly, That the Birth of Jeſus our Lord, in the very Place foretold by *Micah*, happen-

happening againſt all Likelihood, and by the ſpecial Interpoſition of Providence, could only be intended to fulfill this Prophecy, and therefore ſtrongly atteſts the Truth of Jeſus being the Chriſt.

Thirdly, I ſhall anſwer the Objections that have been raiſed againſt either the Application of this Prediction, or its Serviceableneſs to the Cauſe of Chriſtianity.

Firſt then, I am to ſhew, that Meſſiah's native Place is a Subject better ſuited to the Letter of the Prophecy, now under Conſideration, than any other that has been aſſigned.

Two Things are evidently foretold concerning the Ruler of *Iſrael*, who is the Subject of the Prophecy in the Text. 1*ſt*. That he was to be born at *Bethlehem Ephrata*: And 2*dly*. That his Birth was to do ſignal Honour to that City. As to the former of theſe, it is the natural and obvious Meaning of the Expreſſion, that he ſhould come out of *Bethlehem Ephrata*. But

But what Ruler of *Iſrael* was born there after the giving out of this Prophecy, except Jeſus our Lord, who, tho' his Kingdom was not of this World, was, in a ſpiritual Senſe, the King and Saviour of *Iſrael?*

Secondly, *Micah* predicts concerning this Ruler of *Iſrael*, that he ſhould do ſignal Honour to *Bethlehem Ephrata*, his native Place. Why elſe is the Promiſe introduced with ſaying, *Though thou be little among the Thouſands of Judah*; but to intimate, that extraordinary Honour was thereby confered on the Place. Whereas, there had been nothing uncommon, if a Place of no Note in itſelf ſhould produce a Ruler, who had nothing in him that was extraordinary. But if the Prophet meant to foretell, that the Birth of this Ruler at *Bethlehem* ſhould greatly diſtinguiſh it among the Thouſands of *Judah*, and make it thenceforward not to be eſteemed an obſcure City, as the original Words will very well admit, and as the Chief Prieſts and Scribes in St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel repreſent the

the Senſe of the Prophecy; ſurely he muſt be a Ruler of an extraordinary Character, whoſe Nativity was to ennoble a ſmall and inconſiderable Place, and ſet it high in the Rank of *Jewiſh* Cities. This was in Effect to ſay, that *that new Native of Bethlehem Ephrata* ſhould prove ſo conſiderable a Ruler of *Iſrael*, as to do remarkable Honour to the Place of his Birth. And indeed he had need be a Ruler of uncommon Merit and Dignity, who was to be capable of doing any additional Honour of this Sort to what had been already done to *Bethlehem*, by its having given Birth to *David*. This was already the prime Glory and Diſtinction of that little City, that it gave a Beginning to the Royal Houſe of *Judah*; and what muſt he be, the Splendor of whoſe Birth was to Outſhine and Eclipſe that of *David*, and give *Bethlehem* an Advantage beyond what it had ever received before? In vain ſhall we look for this conſiderable Perſon in the Annals of the *Jewiſh* Hiſtory, unleſs we fix on our Saviour Chriſt, the Son of *David*, whom *David* himſelf acknowledged for his Superior, by calling him

him Lord in the Spirit of Prophecy, His goings forth were literally from Everlasting, and he was the Glory, not of *Bethlehem* only, but of his entire People *Israel*. Indeed the Description of the Ruler in my Text is so full of Magnificence, and is so disproportionate to any Ruler besides him, that it was no Wonder the Scribes of our Saviour's Days should so unanimously explain it of Messias, and thence deliver it as their confirmed Judgment to *Herod* the King, that he was to be born at *Bethlehem* in *Judea*. Not that we build the Certainty of their Opinion upon this Point, on the single Authority of St. *Matthew*'s Gospel. The *Chaldee* Paraphrases, made but little later than the Birth of our Saviour, bear ample Testimony, that the Judgment of the *Jewish* Church in those Days accorded with this Interpretation: For He on the Prophets explains the Ruler, who was to come forth out of *Bethlehem*, of the Messias. Nay, as is truly observed by a learned Prelate of our Church, the Paraphrast was so full of this Notion, that *Bethlehem* seldom comes in his Way, but he hath some Observation upon

upon it concerning the Meſſias. And tho' the *Jews*, for many Ages laſt paſt, have been irreſolute upon this Article, plainly becauſe they have but little Hope, that the Meſſiah they expect will be born at *Bethlehem*, yet in one of their Prayers this ancient traditionary Notion yet ſubſiſts. For therein they call Meſſias *Ben Jeſſe*, the *Bethlehemite*.

Thus we ſee how well this Prophecy ſuits with the Event to which it is applied in the Goſpel of St. *Matthew*, *viz.* Meſſiah's Birth at *Bethlehem*; and conſequently that there is no Weakneſs or Abſurdity in the Allegation. But can the like be ſaid of any other Event, to which that Prophecy has been thought to have Relation? By no Means. For *Zorobabel* (whom, out of his Fondneſs for ſecondary Senſes of Prophecy, *Grotius* ſuppoſes to have been the primary Intention of that in the Text) did not come out of *Bethlehem*, in the uſual Scripture Meaning of that Phraſe; he was not born there, but at *Babylon*, as his Name imports: Nor had he any Relation to the Place,

Place, except that diſtant one, of being a very remote Deſcendent from *David*, who was born in that City near 500 Years before. He might, indeed, on this Account, be called the Son of *David*, but could never be predicted, as coming out of the Town of *Bethlehem*, where *David* was. Again, He, of whom *Micah* ſpeaks, was to be a Ruler of *Iſrael*, which *Zorobabel* never was, who had not either the Power, or the Name of Ruler. He was no more than one of the Heads of the Captivity, being indeed firſt named out of Regard to his Royal Deſcent, but is never named ſingly in any Act of Juriſdiction: Nor do we hear any Thing more of him, ſave that he laid the Foundation-Stone of the ſecond Temple, which for that Reaſon has frequently gone by his Name.

Further, the Ruler of *Iſrael*, foretold in the Text, is ſpoken of in other Terms, that are by much too high and magnificent for *Zorobabel*. His goings forth are declared by the Prophet to have been from Everlaſting. How frigid is the Expoſi-

tion given of these strong Words by *Grotius*, *viz.* that he was descended from a Family, which had swayed the Sceptre of *Judah* for many hundred Years: For Antiquity of Descent, without the Circumstance of Splendor, is the only thing meant by the Words we are speaking of. And yet if we exclude the Notion of Royalty, there was nothing peculiar to *Zorobabel*'s Descent that would distinguish him above others, as one whose goings forth were from Everlasting. The Genealogies of Families among the *Jews* were so exactly and faithfully preserved in the Days of *Zorobabel*, that every one could, as well as he, trace his Pedigree, not only as high as *David*'s Days, but even to those of *Abraham*. Earthly Pedigree, therefore, being an Advantage, which was shared equally by all *Jews*, could be no special Note of him that was to come forth a Ruler of *Israel*; but a divine, an everlasting Original, was the Thing meant; which no Ways suits with *Zorobabel*, nor any other Descendent from *David*, but Christ our Lord, who, in his other

other Nature, was in the Beginning with God, and was God.

Laſtly, How unſuitable to the general Scope of this Prophecy is it to ſuppoſe, that *Zorobabel* was any Part of its Intention. For the great Deſign of it evidently was to predict ſomething that ſhould greatly redound to the Honour of *Bethlehem Ephrata*; ſomething that ſhould give it a greater Dignity, than any Thing which had ever befallen it from its firſt Foundation. But even ſuppoſing *Zorobabel* to have been born there, would that have been an Incident of this Sort? *Bethlehem* had for many Ages been diſtinguiſhed for the native Place of *David*, the Founder of the Royal Line of *Judah*; and if it ſtill needed ſome other happy Event to make it conſiderable among the Thouſands of *Judah*, muſt it not in all Reaſon have been ſomewhat more illuſtrious, than the Birth of a remote Deſcendent of *David*'s; one that was neither King nor Ruler, but only joined with others in conducting a miſerable

Captivity to its former Settlement then in Ruins? On the other Hand, how appoſite is it to conclude, that if aught was wanting to compleat the Glory of *Bethlehem*, as the Mother of great and extraordinary Perſons, which had already produced one, who was a Man after God's own Heart, it ſhould be the Birth of him, who was in the Boſom of the Father, who was the only begotten Son of God: One who was not only the Ruler of *Iſrael*, but who had likewiſe the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermoſt Parts of the Earth for his Poſſeſſion. The Birth of ſuch a one only could ennoble *Bethlehem*, and do for it more than *David*, with all his Power and Royalty, had done for his native Place before. But for *Zorobabel*, who was neither King of *Judah*, nor Native of *Bethlehem*, to ſuppoſe that, merely on Account of his Deſcent from *David*, he was capable of adding aught to the Splendor that City had acquired by giving Birth to ſo great a Prince, would be not only unreaſonable, but alſo abſurd. Thus I truſt it now appears, that the Birth-place of Meſſias is a

Subject

Subject which ſuits with the Letter of the Prophecy in the Text, better than any other that has been yet aſſigned. I therefore proceed to ſhew,

Secondly, That the Birth of Jeſus our Lord, in the very Place foretold by *Micah*, coming to paſs againſt all Likelihood, and happening, not thro' Choice, but of Neceſſity, ſeems evidently intended by Providence for the Completion of the Prophecy before us, and thereby to evince that Jeſus was the Chriſt.

That Jeſus was born at *Bethlehem*, is a Fact atteſted by two of the Evangeliſts, and not to be denied: And yet certain it is, that, in the ordinary Courſe of Things, this was not likely to have happened. For till within a ſhort Time before *Mary* his Mother was delivered of him, her Reſidence was at *Nazareth*, a City of *Galilee*, and at a great Diſtance from *Bethlehem*. If therefore ſhe had followed the Inclinations of Nature, or of Prudence, ſhe would have ſtayed, and been delivered at home, rather

than travel to ſo remote a Place as *Bethlehem*, to the Hazard of her Health, to her own Uneaſineſs, and at an Expence which ſhe and *Joſeph*, her eſpouſed Huſband, were ill able to ſupport. And had ſhe, notwithſtanding all theſe Reaſons to the contrary, choſe to lay her Burden at *Bethlehem*, it might have been ſaid her View was, that in Caſe ſhe was delivered of a Son, he might claim to be acknowledged for the Chriſt, in Virtue of *Micah*'s Prophecy. But ſuch a Completion as this would have been but a weak Support to ſuch a Claim: Becauſe it would have been in the Power of many to qualify their Males for entering their Pretenſions in the ſame Manner. And thoſe, whoſe Birth at *Bethlehem* happened in the ordinary Courſe of Things, would have had a better Title to be conſidered, as ſpoken of by *Micah*, than Jeſus, if his Nativity there had been ſtudiouſly brought about, and againſt all the Rules of Prudence and Convenience. But this was by no Means the Caſe: For, by the ſpecial Appointment of God, an unforeſeen Incident laid the Mother of Jeſus, under

under a Neceſſity of travelling to *Bethlehem*, at ſo unſeaſonable a Time, and of bringing forth a Son there. At this very Juncture comes out a Decree from *Cæſar Auguſtus*, that all the World ſhould be taxed, or rather enrolled, in order to a future Taxation: And all went to be taxed every one into his own City. And *Joſeph* alſo went up from *Galilee* out of the City of *Nazareth* into *Judea*, unto the City of *David*, which is called *Bethlehem*, becauſe he was of the Houſe and Lineage of *David*, to be taxed with *Mary* his eſpouſed Wife, being great with Child. And ſo it was, that, while they were there, the Days were accompliſhed that ſhe ſhould be delivered: And ſhe brought forth her firſt-born Son, and wrapped him in Swadling-Clothes, and laid him in a Manger, becauſe there was no Room for them in the Inn. He muſt be blind who cannot ſee the Traces of an extraordinary Providence in this Affair: For nothing but evident Compulſion could have juſtified the bleſſed Virgin's going to *Bethlehem* ſo out of Time as this was. To clear her from all Suſpicion of Deſign, the

Cauſe of her Journey muſt have been ſomething that was neither of her own ſeeking, nor within her Power to prevent: And juſt ſuch an Occaſion as this offered itſelf, to wit, the Decree of *Cæſar Auguſtus*. A Decree the more remarkable, becauſe it was the firſt of the Kind that had ever been iſſued out with Relation to *Judea*, which had then not long been Tributary to the *Romans*. And thus it was, the Mother of Jeſus became undeſignedly acceſſary to the fullfilling of *Micah*'s Prophecy in the Birth of her Son at *Bethlehem*, the Wiſdom of God having contrived the only conceivable Means of bringing it about contrary to her Intention, that ſo the Event might appear to be no human Device, but the Counſel of Heaven; and the Prophecy of the Text being compleated in ſo extraordinary a Manner, might be a more effectual Proof that Jeſus was the Chriſt, which was the ſecond Point I propoſed to ſpeak to. I go on therefore,

Thirdly, and Laſtly, To anſwer ſuch Objections as have been offered againſt Un-

derſtanding the Prophecy in the Text of Meſſias, or the Completion of it in the Perſon of Jeſus our Lord.

As to the former of theſe, that Meſſias is predicted in the Text, the Thing is ſo very clear, that the Writer, who undertook to anſwer the Argument for Chriſtianity from Prophecy, has in a Manner given up the Point. The latter, *viz.* the Application of *Micah*'s Words to Jeſus the Saviour, he does oppoſe, pretending that it is in the fulleſt Manner confuted by the Context, which deſcribes the Ruler in Terms perfectly inconſiſtent with the Character of Jeſus: Particularly when it ſays. He *ſhall be the Peace, when the Aſſyrians ſhall come into our Land: And when he ſhall tread in our Palaces, then ſhall we raiſe againſt him ſeven Shepherds, and eight principal Men. And they ſhall waſte the Land of Aſſyria with the Sword, and the Land of Nimrod with the Entrances thereof: Thus ſhall he deliver us from the Aſſyrian, when he cometh into our Land, and when he treadeth within our Borders.* Which Words,

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adds the Writer aforeſaid, are ſo plain, as not to need the leaſt Comment to ſhew them to be inapplicable to the peaceable Times and to the Perſon of Jeſus.

In anſwer to all which, it will ſuffice to reply, by granting that, in the literal Acceptation, theſe Words are not applicable to the Perſon of Jeſus, and yet inſiſting that there is a Senſe, in which he compleated all that is here promiſed. For the State of Chriſtianity, in the prophetick Writings, is frequently ſpoken of under *Jewiſh* Images; and, in Conſequence of this Method, the ſpiritual Enemies of Chriſtians are denoted under the Names of the known Adverſaries to the *Jewiſh* People. And as the *Aſſyrians* were the capital Foes to *Judah*; ſo it is no Wonder that all the Enemies of the Chriſtian Name ſhould here be called by their Name, or that the Conqueſts of our Lord, over the Adverſaries of our Church, ſhould be preſignified by his delivering them from the *Aſſyrian*. To this Solution the Objector would probably reply as he does on another ſimilar Occaſion, by aſk-

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ing, how that can be a literal Prophecy, wherein the *Aſſyrians*, the known common Invaders of the *Jews*, are mentioned by Name, and not meant, but other Invaders meant under their Name. And yet he himſelf, at another Time, calls ſuch a Suggeſtion playing upon Words. "For, ſays "he, the literal Senſe, in the preſent Con- "troverſy, ſignifies the Senſe intended by "the Writer, the primary Senſe, in Op- "poſition to a typical, or allegorical, or "ſecondary Senſe; which literal Senſe "may be ſignified as well and as obviuoſly "by a figurative, as by the moſt ſimple "and literal Expreſſion." He muſt therefore give us leave to apply this Reaſoning to the preſent Occaſion, and to tell him in his own Words, that the Senſe we put upon the Prophecy in the Text, may be the literal Senſe, becauſe it is the primary Senſe, tho' ſignified by a figurative Expreſſion.

Againſt the Prophecy of *Micah* being underſtood of Meſſias, it is further objected, that ſince Jeſus's Time it has been deemed among the *Jews* a Matter of no Conſe-

Conſequence where the Meſſias was born, ſince they have ſet up many Meſſias's, who they knew were not born at *Bethlehem*. But which ought we moſt to regard, the ancient and moſt authentick Interpretations of the learned *Jews*, or the Actions of a mad and deſperate Populacy, deprived of their Country, and baniſhed thence, and conſequently out of all Hopes of a Meſſias, who ſhould be born in the Place foretold by the Prophet *Micah*?

Laſtly, The Application of the Prophecy in the Text to Meſſias's native Place is found Fault with, becauſe ſome *Jews* deny the Truth of *Herod*'s ſending to know of the Chief Prieſts, where the Meſſias was to be born, and of the Anſwer made by them to him, ſaying, that Jeſus was not born in *Herod*'s Time, but in *Cyrenius*'s Time, eleven Years after the Death of *Herod*. But how came theſe Men to know that Jeſus was born in *Cyrenius*'s Time? Did they not plainly learn that from St. *Luke*'s Goſpel? And does not the ſame St. *Luke* nevertheleſs inform us, that Jeſus was born

born in the Days of *Herod* the King of *Judea?* If therefore these Facts are inconsistent, no Assertion from such an Historian, that contradicts any other Writer of Credit, ought to have any Weight with us: Nor ought any one to think the worse of St. *Matthew* for his Relation concerning *Herod*'s consulting the Chief Priests at the Time of Jesus's Birth, because another Historian, of no Consideration, makes Jesus to have been born eleven Years after the Death of *Herod.* In short, St. *Matthew* is every Way consistent with himself, who relates the Application objected to: And if St. *Luke* affirms what is incompatible therewith, and in so doing contradicts himself, as well as his Brother Evangelist, must St. *Matthew* suffer for the Faults of St. *Luke?* How partial is this, first to make St. *Luke* contradict himself, and then to make use of him as an Authority against St. *Matthew*, whose Account is consistent throughout. This I say on a Supposition, that St. *Luke*, when he affirms, that our Saviour was born when *Cyrenius* was Governor of *Syria*, had really contradicted both himself and St. *Matthew.*

Matthew. But learned Chriſtians have thoroughly reconciled every ſeeming Difficulty in this Subject, and ſhewn, that Jeſus might be born while *Cyrenius* had Power in *Syria*, and yet be born in the Days of *Herod* the King: So that St. *Luke* in affirming theſe two Facts is perfectly of a Piece with himſelf, and his Brother Evangeliſt. And conſequently the Objection before us, which is built on the Truth of the contrary Suppoſition, has no Foundation.

And now upon the whole we find, that if St. *Matthew*, beſides relating the Application made by the Chief Prieſts and Scribes of the Prophecy in the Text to the Birth-place of Meſſias, had argued from its Completion in the Nativity of Jeſus, for his being the true Chriſt, Logick and good Senſe would have bore him out in ſo doing. Neither *Jews* nor *Gentiles*, in ſuch a Caſe, could have taxed him with ſupporting his Maſter's Claim to the Meſſiahſhip, by a weak and impertinent Allegation from the Old Teſtament. For tho' there was nothing glaring or miraculous in the general View

of a Perſon's being born at *Bethlehem*, yet the Providence, to which the Birth of Jeſus in that Place is to be aſcribed, was ſo ſingular, as might raiſe a juſt Expectation of ſomething extraordinary to be produced thereby. When therefore he ſet up to be acknowledged as Meſſiah, it was a Particular worthy to be inſiſted on, that without, and even contrary to all Deſign or Likelihood, he was providentially born, where the Prophet *Micah*, as explained by the beſt *Jewiſh* Interpreters, had foretold Meſſiah ſhould come forth. For which, and other eminent Completions of Prophecies, that confirm our Faith in Chriſt our Lord, to him, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, *&c.*

SERMON III.

JOHN iv. 48.

Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, except ye ſee Signs and Wonders, ye will not believe!

IN many former Lectures, I have conſidered the moſt eminent of the Prophecies in the Old Teſtament, which are applied to Chriſt by himſelf and the Writers of the New; and have ſhewn, that there is nothing, to ſay the leaſt of this Matter, abſurd, weak, or even improbable in ſuch Applications: But that they are always plauſible, and often unanſwerable, eſpecially by *Jews*, to whom alone ſuch Proofs are addreſſed by Jeſus, and the inſpired Authors of the New Teſta-

ment Scriptures. The Conſequence of which is, that the other Proof from Miracles is thereby diſcharged of every Incapacity laid upon it, by the unbelieving Writer againſt Chriſtianity, with whom I am principally concerned. For, ſince the Old Teſtament, ſo far as the New is founded thereon, appears to be no invalid Foundation; ſince the Inferences made from thence, by inſpired Writers, are not falſe; ſince the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, ſaid by them to have been fulfilled, have been accordingly fulfilled; ſince a *Meſſias* has been expreſsly marked out by the Prophets of the Old Teſtament, and the Events of Jeſus have correſponded with all the Characters, by which *Meſſias* is there diſtinguiſhed; Miracles may ſtill avail the Chriſtian Cauſe, and be an unanſwerable Argument to all but Atheiſts, for the divine Miſſion of Jeſus to be the Saviour of the World. We want them not, therefore, to reconcile Contradictions, in as much as no ſuch Thing appears in the Proof for Chriſtianity from Prophecy, as it ſtands in the New Teſtament, but only to remove Doubts, and

and to get the better of Prejudices. For, admitting the Applications, made by Chriſt and his Apoſtles from the Old Teſtament, not to have been always clear and obvious; yet, ſo long as they were not apparently weak or falſe, the *Jews* were without Excuſe for not being convinced by them: For it is a Maxim, little leſs than ſelf-evident, that divinely inſpired Books are beſt underſtood, and beſt explained, by divinely inſpired Interpreters: But that Chriſt and his Apoſtles were of this Sort, was evident to every one they converſed withal, from the many and wonderful Miracles done by them. The bare Affirmation therefore of ſuch Perſons, in Favour of Chriſtianity from the Old Teſtament, if not obviouſly ſhocking or abſurd, without ſtrict Reaſoning, or logical Illation, ought to have been believed by the *Jews* of thoſe Days, and of our own alſo; and whatever different traditionary Interpretations they might before have entertained, they ſhould thenceforward have utterly rejected them, if they contradicted the Senſes of the Prophets declared, by ſuch as gave undoubted Evi-

dence, that they were Prophets themſelves.

Theſe plain and ſtrong Suggeſtions had been urged by the learned Defenders of Chriſtianity, againſt a former Attempt of my preſent Adverſary: But he, inſtead of a direct Anſwer, amuſes us with a wrong State of the Importance of Prophecy to the Truth of Chriſtianity, which, when rightly underſtood, no one denies, and with a Series of Propoſitions, all which are either falſe or impertinent, or both.

With amazing Confidence he begins thus. "Had Jeſus Chriſt come into the "World, as a Perſon ſent with a Revela-"tion from God of a new Religion; and "had he performed Miracles as the Cre-"dentials of his Miſſion, he would have "had a Right to be attended to, and tried "upon that Foot." As if this was not the very State of the Caſe: For did he ever make any open, expreſs, and avowed Claim before the unbelieving *Jews*, to be any Thing but a Perſon ſent with a Revelation of

of a new Religion from God; and did he not directly urge Miracles, as the Credentials of his Miſſion, for that Purpoſe: And has he not therefore a Right to be tried, upon this Writer's own Principles, on that Foot? No, ſays he, for he claims to be the Son of God, or Meſſias of the *Jews*, foretold by the Prophets, and therefore it is requiſite that Claim ſhould be made out. Now, ſuppoſing this to be true, Does not he, who makes out that he is a Perſon ſent from God to reveal a new Religion, at the ſame Time virtually prove whatever elſe he claims to be? For had Jeſus abuſed his Commiſſion, and, in Virtue of that, claimed to be ſomewhat more than he really was, it is incredible that God ſhould continue the miraculous Credentials of a Miſſion ſo unworthily performed. He, therefore, that ſhould try Jeſus's Claim to be the Son of God, or the Meſſias of the *Jews*, foretold by the Prophets, entirely upon the Foot of Miracles, would act neither unreaſonably nor unjuſtly; would not take his Religion upon Truſt, as is falſely ſuggeſted by our Adverſary; but proceed

upon a Proof, which, tho' indirect, is sufficient. For, by this one Argument, the Messiahship of Jesus is made out to be morally certain, and one thousand Arguments would prove no more: By this Medium, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and indeed all Mankind, except Atheists, and the Followers of *Epicurus*, may arrive at a rational Belief in Jesus. Admitting therefore the Messiahship of Jesus to be the fundamental Article of the Christian Religion, there is no Necessity for that Point to be made out by a direct Appeal to the Old Testament; but it may, to all reasonable Intents and Purposes, be made out from the Miracles recorded in the Gospels. Herein we have likewise the concurrent Testimony of St. *John the Evangelist*, who, after having mentioned the Miracles wrought by Jesus after his Resurrection, tells us, that *he did many other Signs in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in his Gospel, and that those he had mentioned were written, that Men might believe Jesus to be the Christ the Son of God.* So that the Sufficiency of the Argument

gument from Miracles to prove these Points, is not only the Voice of Reason, but also the Doctrine of the Gospel.

In vain then is it for our Adversary to urge the Claim to the Messiahship, as if it was necessarily to be tried and examined by the Old Testament, from the Nature of it. For the Nature of all Claims is so far one and the same, that they require no more than effectual Proof, and whosoever rejects this, under any Pretence whatever, is utterly unreasonable.

Nor is he more pertinent, when he puts us in Mind, that Jesus appeals to the Old Testament, and directs Men to search for him there; and that the Author of the Acts commends Men for searching the Old Testament, to see after the Things of Jesus; unless it follows from thence, that no other Proof, particularly not that of Miracles, was to be admitted of our Lord's Claim to be Messiah. But this is by no Means the Case: For, by recommending one Method of Proof, no one is ever un-

ſtood to ſuperſede all Methods beſides. And this would be a Conſtruction more particularly abſurd in the preſent Queſtion; becauſe, as our Lord is preſumed ſometimes to appeal to the Old Teſtament for the Truth of his Meſſiahſhip, ſo does he often, for the ſame Purpoſe, and in much ſtronger Terms, appeal to Miracles, deſiring no Belief, if they were not ſufficient to convince. From theſe Things, therefore, laid and conſidered together, it follows, that our Lord was of Opinion, that Prophecy and Miracles were either of them valid Proofs of the Claim he laid to the Meſſiahſhip; and conſequently, that if we try it the latter Way only, we ſet up a Standard which is every Way competent, trying his Pretenſions by a Method, to which he himſelf voluntarily ſubmitted them.

Our Adverſary, the Writer ſo oft mentioned, further obſerves, that the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament were urged in the New, not only as Teſts to try the Meſſias Jeſus by, but alſo as Proofs to per-

ſuade, and to convince Men, that Jeſus is the Meſſiah. All which we grant to be true, with one Limitation, that Prophecies were ſo urged to convince *Jews* only: For the New Teſtament does not afford a ſingle Inſtance of a *Gentile*, to whom the Argument from Prophecy was uſed, in order to make him a Chriſtian. From whence it ſhould ſeem to follow, that this was not ſo abſolute a Proof as our Man repreſents it. For then it would have been applied indiſcriminately to *Gentiles*, as well as to *Jews*, which it plainly is not.

But this limited Application of Prophecy in the New Teſtament, tho' a Fact, and only to be contradicted by counter Evidence, is attempted to be diſproved from Reaſon. In order to which we are told, "that, at this Rate, Prophecies in the "New Teſtament are mere Proofs *ad* "*Hominem* to the *Jews*; that if they are "only urged by the Apoſtles as Proofs to "the *Jews*, and intended only as Proofs "founded on the miſtaken Meanings of "the Old Teſtament of ſome *Jews* of "their

" their Time; what Senſe is there in ap-
" pealing upon all Occaſions, and recom-
" mending the Reading and Search thereof,
" for the Trial and Proof of what was
" preached? For that was to proceed on
" Weakneſs itſelf, knowing it to be ſo."

But where did our Antagoniſt learn, that in relative Proofs, or Proofs *ad Hominem*, he who uſes ſuch Proofs, always and neceſſarily proceeds upon the miſtaken Principles of thoſe whom he would convince. That it is an utter Miſtake I will make out by a plain Inſtance. The Advocates for Chriſtianity, evidently conſider Miracles as a Proof of their Religion, not abſolute in itſelf, and therefore not applicable to all Sorts of Men, but relative only to ſuch as own the Being and Attributes of God: So that Miracles, are in the Uſe and Application of them, Arguments *ad Hominem*, for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion: And yet every one knows, that the Defenders of Chriſtianity believe the Being and Attributes of God, as firmly as Deiſts do; and therefore argue not with them *ad Ho-*

minem,

minem, from any miſtaken Principles of theirs, as our Adverſary would perſuade us is always done in relative Proofs: But ſuch Proofs are ſometimes built on real Truths, allowed to be ſuch by both Sides in the Diſpute. And particularly the Argument *ad Hominem* before us, that from Prophecy, is urged by the Apoſtles to *Jews* only; not becauſe they miſtook the Old Teſtament in certain Points favourable to the Chriſtian Cauſe, (for the Apoſtles and they were agreed in the Meaning of moſt Prophecies, and differed only about the Application of them) but becauſe the *Jews* believed the divine Authority of the Old Teſtament as well as they (the Apoſtles) did: Whereas the *Gentiles*, not acknowledging the inſpired Character of thoſe Books, nor perhaps ſo much as their juſt Antiquity, could not be ſo well convinced by the Prophecies therein contained.

Another Argument with our Adverſary, for the Importance of Prophecy to the Converſion of *Gentiles*, ſuperior to that of the Proof from Miracles, is, that Prophecies

phecies are a more plain and convincing Evidence than Miracles: And for this he reaſons as follows.

"What, ſays he, can be more eaſy to "know, and more plain and convincing, "than a Prophecy fulfilled, in the Que- "ſtion before us; who can have ſuch un- "doubted Evidence of the Exiſtence of "the Books of the Old Teſtament [ſup- "poſed to contain numerous Prophecies "fulfilled in the New Teſtament] long "before the Books of the New were writ- "ten, and have therefore very little to "do, but to compare the one with the "other, the Prophecies in the Old with "the Completions in the New? They are "perpetual and ſtanding Miracles, and do "not diſappear, like other Miracles, on "their Performance. And how much "ſhort of ſuch plain miraculous Evidence, "as are Prophecies, recorded before the "Events foretold and fulfilled, muſt be "any Reports of Miracles, whereof Men "in all Ages and Countries have generally "been the Inventors?"

This

This Reaſoning, if it were otherwiſe valid, would be quite foreign to the preſent Queſtion, which is the ſuperior Importance of the Evidence of Prophecy to that of Miracles, in the Times of the Apoſtles, and its being then as applicable to *Gentiles* as to *Jews*. For the Books of the New Teſtament were not then written, and therefore the Completions of the antient Prophecies in the Events of Jeſus, were known to the *Gentiles* then only by Report, as well as the Miracles wrought by him. So that theſe two Evidences were then, with Reſpect to the *Gentiles*, exactly on the ſame Footing, and conſequently were equally plain and convincing. And as for Miracles wrought by the Apoſtles, the *Gentiles* were often Eye-witneſſes themſelves to their Reality, and when this was not the Caſe, received the Truths of thoſe Facts from the Teſtimony of their Fellow *Gentiles*. So that the Evidence of Miracles was to them plainer and more convincing than Prophecies. But the Diſtinction, upon which our Author here reaſons, has no real Foundation. For we now believe the

the Evidence of Prophecy upon the Credit and Authority of the Gospel Writers, who relate those Facts whereby the Predictions of the Old Testament were fulfilled: And on this very Bottom we likewise believe the Fact of Miracles, *viz.* because we find them on Record in Books that are worthy of Belief. As therefore Prophecies are standing and perpetual, and do not disappear, because registered in authentick Books of publick Recourse; the same may be said for Miracles, which no more disappear on their Performance, as this Man falsely affirms, than the Completions of Prophecy do, but are both preserved in the same venerable Repositories *viz.* the inspired Writings of the New Testament: And consequently the Reasoning of our Adversary in the present Case, is built on a Distinction without a Difference: Inasmuch as both Prophecy and Miracles are standing and perpetual Evidences, or else neither of them are such. *Lastly*, As for what he says by Way of Disparagement to Miracles, that Men, in all Ages and Countries, have generally been the Inventors of them;

them; the very ſame Objection will lye againſt Ptophecies: For Men have as frequently, and as generally invented Prophecies, as they have Reports of Miracles.

Of this Point, the ſuperior Importance of Prophecies to the Proof of Chriſtianity from Miracles, our Author is ſo confident, as to make Jeſus himſelf declare for it. "Jeſus, ſays he, himſelf declares ſo far "againſt Miracles, as to ſuppoſe Prophe-"cies of more Weight, than Miracles "wrought in our Preſence, even than raiſ-"ing a dead Perſon. If, ſays he, Men "will not hear *Moſes* and the Prophets, "neither will they be perſuaded, tho' one "roſe from the Dead".

But I deny that Jeſus, in ſaying this, made Prophecies of more Weight than Miracles: At moſt he makes the Weight of the two Evidences to be but equal. For if he had argued *a fortiori*, as the Schools call it, he muſt have expreſſed himſelf thus. If Men will not hear *Moſes* and the Prophets, much leſs will they

be perſuaded, tho' one roſe from the Dead. But from the Saying of our Lord, as he uttered it, no other Conſequence can fairly be drawn than this; that he thought if one ſufficient Argument would not perſuade Men, neither would another of equal Sufficiency effect the Buſineſs. But after all, what were theſe Men to be perſuaded of; was it of the Truth of Chriſtianity; and is it of unbelieving Men in general that our Lord ſpeaks? Thus, doubtleſs, the Author intended that Readers ſhould apprehend the Thing; becauſe, otherwiſe our Lord's Saying declares and ſuppoſes nothing of what he makes it declare and ſuppoſe. And yet he himſelf very well knew, that the Perſons of whom our Lord ſpake, were not unbelieving Men in general, and that what they were to be perſuaded to, was not the Belief of Chriſtianity, but the Practice of Virtue and Sobriety. In ſhort, they were the Brethren of *Dives* in the Parable, who did not live up to the Doctrine of *Moſes* and the Prophets, tho' they had them, or believed them; and therefore, in our Lord's Judgment, would not

not have been perſuaded to leave off their Libertin Courſes, tho' one had roſe from the Dead, and told them what Miſery their Brother had brought upon himſelf in the other World by the ſame Vices. Had not our Author meant to deceive, the Reader ſhould have been apprized of all theſe Circumſtances: But he knew, that in ſo doing he ſhould defeat his own Purpoſes, and that every one well informed of the Occaſion of our Lord's Saying, would immediately ſee, that our Lord declared nothing againſt Miracles, nor in Favour of Prophecy, as he ſuppoſes. So that *Moſes* and the Prophets being here conſidered, not as Foretellers of Events, but as inſpired Teachers of Morality only; the Paſſage has no Relation to Prophecies, and therefore is quite foreign to the Queſtion in Hand. Beſides, he has not fairly cited our Lord's Words, which are, *if they*, i. e. the Brethren of *Dives* abovementioned, *hear not* Moſes *and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, tho' one roſe from the Dead:* Whereas our Adverſary makes Jeſus to ſay, *if* Men *believe not* Moſes *and*

the Prophets, and thereby practices a premeditated Fraud upon his Readers, intending they ſhould believe, that theſe Words were not ſpoken on a particular Occaſion, nor related to the Doctrines of *Moſes* and the Prophets, but to their Predictions, as Evidences for Chriſtianity, ſuperior to that of Miracles. Were a Man to chicane at this Rate in his Worldly Dealings, Infamy, if not Puniſhment, muſt attend him. But the moſt ſcandalous Acts againſt revealed Religion may, it ſeems, be practiſed with Safety and Impunity.

But to return: Not content with making Jeſus ſuppoſe Prophecies of more Weight than Miracles, our Author adds.

That "Jeſus plainly makes Miracles no "concluſive Proofs of a Meſſiahſhip, when "he ſays, *There ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhew great Signs or Miracles, and cautions Men not to believe in them.* Now, if this could be made out, it muſt at once ſilence all Advocates for the Meſſias-ſhip of Jeſus from Mi-

racles, and himſelf among the Number, who frequently appeals to his Miracles as concluſive for that Point. For whatſoever Proof is inconcluſive againſt a Claim in general, can never be concluſive for any Claimant in particular. This Argument therefore can never be right, becauſe it proves too much, and deſtroys the Teſtimony on which it reſts, by making the Witneſs contradict himſelf. But, indeed, it requires no great Acuteneſs to detect the Faults of this Reaſoning: For it is plainly built on this wrong Suppoſition, that we make Miracles, in their general Nature, and as Miracles, concluſive for Jeſus's being the Chriſt. Whereas we do not argue, that he is the Meſſias, becauſe he did Miracles, but becauſe he performed more and greater Miracles, than any other Competitor for that Title ever did. And we learn thus to diſtinguiſh from our Lord himſelf, who never requires Belief, merely becauſe he wrought wonderful or miraculous Works, but becauſe the Multitude, and Greatneſs of his Miracles, beſpoke them to be done by the Finger of God. *If I do*

not the Works of my Father, says he, *believe me not*, Joh. x. 37. *i. e.* such Works as no Man could do, except God or the Father was with him. Again, *Joh.* xv. 24. he charges the Sinfulness of Unbelief upon the *Jews*, not upon his having wrought Miracles at large, but such as no other Man had performed. *If*, says he, *I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin.* And this very Circumstance, in the Miracles of our Lord, was what gained him Converts. This in particular convinced *Nicodemus* that Jesus was a Teacher come from God, *viz.* that no Man could do the Miracles which he did, except God were with him. And those many People, who believed on our Lord in the seventh of St. *John*, said for their so doing, *When Christ cometh, will he do more Miracles than these which this Man hath done.* Lastly, our Lord in the Text declares the Necessity of Miracles to the Conversion of his Countrymen, by saying, *that except they saw Signs and Wonders, they would not believe.* Impossible therefore is it, that our Lord, after all this, should

ſhould make Miracles in no Senſe concluſive for a Claim to the Meſſiahſhip, when himſelf had appealed to them for that Purpoſe, and had experienced how ſucceſsful that Proof was, and had owned, that no other Proof without that would be effectual. So that when he cautions his Diſciples *not to believe falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets who ſhould ariſe, tho' they ſhould ſhew great Signs and Wonders*; the Reaſon muſt have been this, tho' it is not expreſsly given, *viz.* that he had ſhewn ſtill greater: For by this Superiority of Miracles it appeared, that Jeſus alone was the true Chriſt, and the true Prophet, and conſequently that all who made the ſame Claims after him were falſe ones.

Beſides, the Paſſage in which it is pretended, that Jeſus makes Miracles no concluſive Proofs of a Meſſiahſhip, virtually proves the contrary: For if there had been nothing in them at all concluſive for that Point, the Caution he gives his Diſciples againſt being deceived by them, had been altogether needleſs. And further, our Lord

 declares,

declares, at the ſame Time, *that the falſe Chriſts, and falſe Prophets, by the great Signs and Wonders done by them, would, if it were poſſible, deceive the very Elect*; that, however, common Chriſtians would be in the utmoſt Peril of being ſeduced, if he had not beforehand warned them of their Danger. Surely, then, this was making Miracles, as Miracles, in ſome Meaſure concluſive, tho' not deciſive Proofs of a Meſſiahſhip, contrary to what is advanced by our Author.

Thus I hope it appears, that the Claim ſet up by Jeſus our Lord to the Meſſiahſhip, may be made unqueſtionably good, by the alone Argument from his Miracles; and that there is nothing in the Nature of the Claim itſelf, or in the manner of our Lord's urging it, that neceſſarily requires it to be tried by a direct Appeal to the Old Teſtament. Suppoſing, therefore, what we are very far from granting, that the Pretenſions of Jeſus to the Meſſiahſhip, could not, at this Time of Day, be made out from Prophecy, Infidelity would ſtill remain with-

without Excuſe, ſo long as the other Evidence to the Truth of Chriſtianity, from Miracles, continued in Force : Nor in this Caſe would Believers be chargeable with taking their Religion upon Truſt. For a Man acts as rationally, who aſſents upon one good and ſufficient Motive, as if he did it upon ever ſo many : It is not the Number, but the Weight of Arguments, which makes them convincing ; and therefore a Man, who aſſents to the Truth of Chriſtianity, upon one good and ſufficient Motive, acts as rationally, as he who founds his Faith upon ever ſo great a Multitude of Evidences.

SERMON IV.

2 PET. i. 21.

For the Prophecy came not of old Time by the Will of Man: But holy Men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.

IT has been the entire Buſineſs of my foregoing Lectures to ſtate and defend the two great Evidences for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, *viz.* Miracles, and the Completion of ancient Prophecies. I have ſhewn, that Miracles ſo circumſtanced as thoſe related in the Goſpels are, if allowed to be real Facts, afford a moral Certainty of the divine Authority of the Goſpel, and that for the Reality of thoſe Facts we have the ſame Degree of Certainty;

ty; it being utterly inconſiſtent with the eſſential Perfections of Almighty God, either to allow ſuch mighty Atteſtations to ſo diſhoneſt and impious an Impoſture, or to ſuffer falſe Facts in ſupport of it, to come down recommended to us with better hiſtorical Evidence, than we have for any Events whatever, that are equally remote in Time from us. So that to all but Atheiſts, the Argument from Miracles is a ſhort, a clear, and an irrefragable Proof that the Chriſtian Revelation came from God. Becauſe, if a Religion thus confirmed may ſtill be falſe, God muſt be held the permiſſive Author of the Fraud, and Mankind have been led into Error by entertaining too high an Opinion of the divine Juſtice, Goodneſs, and Truth, which would be a deteſtable Blaſphemy for any Man to ſay, or even to think. The late Enemies to Chriſtianity are very ſenſible that there is great Truth and Cogency in this Method of proving the divine Authority of the Goſpel Religion, and that if it were once admitted, it would leave them no other Choice, but of embracing Atheiſm or Chriſ-

Chriſtianity. Being therefore utterly averſe to the latter of theſe Courſes, and believing the former would be attended with popular Odium and Danger, they have bent their whole Force againſt the Evidence from Prophecies fulfilled, bearing us down againſt common Senſe and plain Scripture, that this is the only Teſt by which a rational Chriſtian ought to try his Faith in Jeſus, as the Meſſias and Saviour of the World. Not that they really believe the Argument from Prophecy to be weak and inconcluſive, but becauſe from the Nature of that Proof they find Room and Opportunity for Chicane and Length of Oppoſition. Facts are plain as well as ſtubborn Things, and lead directly to a Concluſion: Whereas Prophecies depend upon Language, which is always more or leſs Equivocal, and upon prophetick Language, which is more eminently looſe and figurative than any other. Here therefore an unfair and diſputatious Adverſary may keep the Queſtion from an Iſſue for a long Time, and Controverſy become in a Manner endleſs. In the mean time the ignorant

rant World ſtands at a Gaze, and being apt to conclude, that there can be no Certainty in an Argument that admits of ſo long and continued Oppoſition, grows cool to Religion, if it does not begin to doubt the Validity of the Foundation whereon it ſtands. The celebrated Deviſer of this battering Engine againſt Chriſtianity, having affirmed thoſe to be the only Grounds and Reaſons of it, which he could beſt deal with; and having, as he would have the World think, demoliſhed its only Bulwark, that of Prophecy, he then calls upon Miracles to do their worſt, he inſults them as of no avail, becauſe they cannot make a Foundation good, which is naturally bad, becauſe they cannot reconcile Contradictions, or palliate Abſurdities. On the other Hand I have ſhewn, that this Writer gives a falſe Repreſentation of the Grounds and Reaſons on which the Founder of our Religion, and his Under-Labourers, the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts, build the Chriſtian Faith. For tho' they affirm, that the Things of Jeſus fulfilled Prophecy, nay, proved Jeſus to be the Chriſt from the Scriptures

Scriptures of the Old Teſtament to *Jewiſh* Audiences; yet they chiefly and more frequently appeal to Miracles, as the principal Evidence of our Lord's Claim to that, and every other Title ſet up by him. True indeed it is, that, however ſtrong the Evidence from Miracles may be, it cannot mend the State of the other collateral Proof from Prophecy: But if that be weak or impertinent, and much more if it be falſe, it muſt remain ſo, tho' joined with another Argument that is irrefragable. And then the Grounds and Reaſons of the Chriſtian Religion would ſtand thus: That one of its Supports was impregnably ſtrong, and the other indefenſibly weak. But the bare mention of ſo medley a Foundation is ſufficient to expoſe it as utterly improbable. For what human Schemiſt ever was, or ever would be ſo abandoned by common Senſe, as, when he had one ſufficient and inconteſtible Proof of his Point, to diſgrace it, by adding another that was apparently weak or falſe? Diverſe Arguments tending to the ſame Concluſion may very properly be uſed, though they be not all of equal Strength, becauſe of the Variety of Taſtes and

and Capacities; ſome Men being more affected by one Proof, than by another that is equally good, or perhaps better. But it is abſurd at the firſt hearing to ſuppoſe, that Jeſus, or his Apoſtles, who had the Seal of divine Approbation from Miracles, and who daily ſaw the Succeſs of thoſe Credentials, ſhould join a weak or a falſe Atteſtation from Prophecy, which was neither needed nor called for; which muſt do infinite Diſhonour and Hurt to the Chriſtian Cauſe, and not the leaſt poſſible Service. For what elſe was this but to diſparage a good Cauſe, by a notoriouſly bad Management, and to give up a certain Victory by a falſe Fire, when better Ammunition was at Hand? When we further conſider who was the Author of Miracles, even God himſelf, the Improbability that Prophecies are weakly or falſely alledged in the Writings of the New Teſtament becomes a moral Impoſſibility: For no ſober Man can imagine, that God would lend the Aid of his Almighty Power to go along with other falſe and enthuſiaſtick Proofs of a divine Revelation; or that he, who inſpired the firſt Teachers of Chriſtianity, and communicated to them the

the Knowledge of ſo many preternatural Truths, would not, by the Aſſiſtance of the ſame Spirit, preſerve them from laying a rotten or ſandy Foundation of the whole. Let the Appearances therefore of Difficulty, in reconciling the Application of the Old Teſtament to Events in the New, be ever ſo great, a rational Perſon may venture ſtill to pronounce that all is Right in that Particular upon this general Maxim, that God cannot approve of and recommend a falſe Method of proving his own Truth by the Sanction of Miracles; or permit his own wiſe Counſels to go Hand in Hand with the Follies and Weakneſſes of Men, who act in his Name, and by a real Authority from him. I very well know that the Managers for Infidelity will be as ready as we to grant, that Things can never happen thus; and from hence raiſe an Argument againſt the Fact of Miracles, urging, that Miracles ſaid to have been done in Confirmation of a Religion thus weakly founded on Prophecy, ought to be deemed falſe Reports, however they may otherwiſe be well and properly atteſted. But here we may turn their own Artillery

tillery againſt them, and ſay, that if the Fact of Miracles be clearly proved, a ſuppoſed Weakneſs or Falſhood of the other Evidence from Prophecy cannot abate the Value of what is true and undoubted. For if Jeſus and his Apoſtles applied Prophecies to ſuch Events, as thoſe Prophecies had no Relation to, it will not make the Miracles they did never to have happened at all, or not to be Evidences of divine Approbation. If the Predictions, for Inſtance, concerning Chriſt's Reſurrection from the Old Teſtament are wrong, and improperly cited for that Purpoſe, were the Diſciples to diſbelieve the Report of their own Senſes, when they ſaw their Maſter alive again from the Dead? Or were ſucceeding Generations to give no Credit to the Teſtimonies of thoſe Eye-witneſſes, who ſealed their Depoſitions with their deareſt Blood? In ſhort, nothing ſhould induce us to deem any Report of Miracles falſe, but either Abſurdity in the Thing reported, or Want of Veracity in the Perſon or Perſons reporting. And as neither of theſe Defects are to be charged on the Fact of the Goſpel-Miracles, that Fact muſt be credited by all reaſonable

Men: And wherever the Miracles of the Gospel gain Credit, the Prophecies therein applied may be taken upon Content, for the Reasons above-mentioned. However, as Prophecies are certainly a Scripture Evidence, I have also particularly stated and defended that Topick, shewing by an Induction of many Particulars, that the Predictions of the Old Testament, applied to Christ in the New, are not falsely, or even weakly accommodated, but are often strong and unanswerable, always plausible, pertinent, and persuasive.

Upon the whole then, the two great Evidences for Christianity, Miracles and Prophecy stand clear of all Objections: Either of them are sufficient, neither of them hurt or obstruct the other, and jointly taken, they are irrefragable Arguments of the Truth and divine Original of Christianity, which was the Point I set out withall.

If any Thing more is necessary to this Argument, it must be the Genuineness and

Authenticity of the Books concerned therein. For Inſtance, the Predictions of the Old Teſtament, which we contend for as compleated in the New, cannot be accounted as Prophecies, if they had not a proper Antiquity, and were not given out by Perſons divinely inſpired. Again, admitting both theſe Things to be true, the Completions of thoſe Prophecies are Events recorded in the Goſpels, the Credit and Verity of which Books therefore ſhould be clear from all juſt Exception. In the ſame Books alſo are related the Miracles of our Lord: So that unleſs the Characters of the ſacred Hiſtorians, and their Qualifications, to write on the Subjects they took in Hand, be made apparent, and the Genuineſs of the Goſpels, attributed to the ſeveral Evangeliſts, be likewiſe made out; neither Prophecies fulfilled, nor Miracles done, have any ſure Foundation of Truth, and Chriſtianity will be at once deprived of its main Supports.

The firſt Point therefore to be made out, is the Genuineneſs and Authenticity of the Old

Old Teſtament Scriptures, in all its conſtituent Parts, *viz.* the Law of *Moſes*, the Prophets, and the Pſalms, in each of which Diviſions our Lord himſelf affirms, that Things were written concerning him. *Luke* xxiv. 44.

With regard to the firſt of theſe, the five Books of *Moſes*, we have for their inſpired Character, and for their being the genuine Work of that great Lawgiver, the conſtant and unanimous Tradition of the entire *Jewiſh* Nation. A conſiderable Sect among them, the *Sadducees* rejected the two latter Diviſions of Scriptural Books: But all, without Exception, admit the *Pentateuch*, or five Books of *Moſes*, as Sacred and Canonical. Beſides the Original of the World, and the great Changes brought upon it by the Deluge, of which other Hiſtories gives us only faint and fabulous Imitations, thoſe ancient Books contain the Hiſtory and Deſcent of the Patriarchs, the Original of the *Jewiſh* Eſtabliſhment, their religious and municipal Laws, which being in daily Uſe could receive no Alteration

without a Diſcovery, much leſs could they all at once be obtruded upon that People, as their ancient ſtanding Rule of civil and religious Polity. We need but figure to ourſelves how impracticable a Deſign it would prove, ſhould any Man, or ſet of Men, at this Time of Day, attempt to perſuade us, that the *Alcoran* is, and always had been the Rule of Faith and Manners to all Chriſtendom, or that the *Romiſh* Breviary is, and ever was the Ritual of divine Service in the Reformed Church of *England*: I ſay, we need but figure to ourſelves the Impoſſibility of obtruding ſuch a Perſuaſion upon us in theſe Times, and we muſt be convinced how abſurd a Suppoſition it muſt be, that a Plan of Religion, like that contained in the five Books of *Moſes*, which was to take Place in and from his own Time, could afterwards be received among the *Jews* for his, unleſs it had been genuine. Becauſe that whole Nation muſt have been ſtupid to the laſt Degree not to know, at the firſt hearing of thoſe new Regulations, that they had never been under any ſuch Direction before. Corrupt

rupt Variations in Doctrine and Worſhip may obtain, and have obtained, both among *Jews* and Chriſtians: But that an entirely new Syſtem of Religion ſhould be received for one of old and ſtanding Uſe, could never happen, but to a People utterly and univerſally deprived of Memory and common Senſe.

It has indeed been alledged againſt the Genuineneſs of the five Books of *Moſes*, and upon the Authority of the ſacred Hiſtory itſelf, that thoſe Books were twice loſt; and that therefore allowing them once to have had a real Exiſtence, it may juſtly be queſtioned, whether thoſe we now have were the Works of that great Legiſlator, or a Forgery to ſupply the Room of the loſt *Pentateuch*.

The firſt pretended Loſs of the Law is ſuppoſed to have happened in the Time of *Manaſſeh* King of *Judah*, and the Fact of this firſt Loſs is founded on what we read in the 22d *Chap.* of the ſecond Book of *Kings*; that in the Days of *Joſiah*, *Manaſ-*

Jeh's Grand-Son and Succeſſor, *Hilkiah* the High-prieſt found the Book of the Law in the Houſe of the Lord, and ſpake of it to *Shaphan*, and he again unto the King, who was ſurpriſed at the Contents of the Book, to that Degree as to rent his Clothes, to enquire of the Lord by *Huldah* the Propheteſs, to cauſe the Book to be read in the Ears of the People, and to renew the Covenant with the Lord. Now from hence it appears, that during the long and wicked Reign of *Manaſſeh*, in which Idolatry had prevailed, and been encouraged beyond the Example of the worſt preceding Times, the Houſe of the Lord, and the Services of the Temple, and the Temple itſelf, had been grievouſly neglected; that the People for ſo long had not been inſtructed in the Law, nor had the Words thereof read in their Ears; that the King himſelf, tho' ſhockt at the Idolatries and Prophaneneſs of the Land, had been kept from the Sight of the Law of *Moſes* till the Original thereof, depoſited in the Temple, was brought and ſhewn to him, with a Deſign to work upon his good Diſpoſition,

tion, and to introduce a Reformation; that the High-prieſt had Reaſon to fear leſt that ſacred Depoſitum ſhould have been loſt during the Neglect and Profanation of the Temple, and therefore is ſaid to have found it, not becauſe it had ever been actually loſt, but becauſe it was apprehended to be in Danger. But had that divine Autograph really been loſt, it is by no Means to be imagined that it was the only Copy of the Law, for many, and thoſe, I think, unanſwerable Reaſons.

Firſt, there had been, at leaſt, from the Times of *David*, a Profeſſion of Men called *Scribes*, whoſe principal Buſineſs it was to take correct Copies of the Law, as well as to explain it to the People. And at the very Time of this ſuppoſed Loſs, there is one of this Function mentioned as above, *Shaphan* the Scribe. This Condition of Things therefore almoſt neceſſarily ſuppoſes a great Number of ſacred Copies ſpread abroad, all which could not be loſt in the Reigns of *Manaſſeh* and *Amon*, unleſs the entire Land had become Apoſtates from

the Law, which was by no Means the Caſe. For,

Secondly, There were, during the Time in which this Loſs of the Law is ſuſpected to have happened, ſome inſpired Prophets, ſuch as *Huldah* abovementioned, and *Jeremiah*, to whom the Words of the Lord came before *Hilkiah* found the Book of the Law in the Temple; beſides, *Hilkiah* and *Shaphan*, and many other religious Perſons, moſt, if not all of which, muſt have had Copies of the Law for their own Uſe, and that of their Families, *Shaphan* in particular, whoſe Profeſſion obliged him to write out, and to explain the Law, muſt have been altogether a Stranger to it, if no Copy thereof was then known to ſubſiſt, which is abſurd to imagine.

Thirdly, If *Hilkiah*'s finding the Book of the Law had really been the retrieving of that Treaſure, after it was preſumed to be entirely loſt, how comes it to paſs that ſo little Notice was taken of ſo auſpicious an Event? Publick Bleſſings, of an inferior Nature

Nature to this, were wont to be commemorated by anniverſary Feaſts; and that no ſuch Notice ſhould be taken of the Recovery of their Law, had it really been loſt, is by no Means credible. From the Foundation of the *Jewiſh* State, and the firſt giving of the Law, no Deliverance had ever happened to that People, which would admit of a Compariſon with the Recovery of the Law by *Hilkiah*, if it had been truly ſuch; and yet we find not ſo much as one ſingle Rejoicing for what deſerved daily Triumphs and Feſtivities.

Upon the whole therefore, it is incredible, that the finding of the Book of the Law in the Temple, under the Reign of *Joſiah*, ſhould mean a Recovery of it after it had been loſt. All we can probably collect from it is, that *Hilkiah*, upon a narrow and more particular Survey of the Temple, in order to the neceſſary Reparations of it, obſerved that Book, which he had not ſeen there before, and choſe to lay it before the King, rather than any private Copy, only

on Account of its particular Sacredneſs and Authenticity.

The ſecond Loſs of the Law is pretended to have happened during the ſeventy Years Captivity of the *Jews* at *Babylon*: But here our Adverſaries have no Countenance, even from the Sound of Scripture. For it is not ſaid, after the Return of the People, that *Ezra* found the Book of the Law: But only that they deſired him, whoſe Office it was, as a Scribe and a Prieſt too, to preſerve, and to propagate that ſacred Code, to bring the Book of the Law of *Moſes*, and that accordingly he brought it before the Congregation. It was a Book therefore known to have ſubſiſted all along: Only the Hardſhips of the Captivity, and a long Want of Opportunities to be inſtructed therein, had let in among the People many Corruptions, which they were deſirous ſhould then be reformed according to the Law of *Moſes*, which the Lord had commanded. Indeed the only Pretence any one can have for ſuggeſting that the Law of *Moſes* was loſt in the Captivity

tivity is, that ſuch a Thing might then poſſibly have happened: But that no ſuch Loſs was then ſuſtained, beſides what has been already urged, appears moſt evident from the ſtrict Conformity of *Daniel*, and his Brethren to Precepts of the *Moſaick* Law, during the Captivity, as well ceremonial as moral; which could not have been the Caſe, if that great Rule of Behaviour had then been utterly loſt. Beſides, we find *Daniel*, but ten Years before the Expiration of the *Babyloniſh* Captivity, was actually in Poſſeſſion of the Law of *Moſes*; for at that Time he appeals to what is written in that Law, which therefore muſt then have been extant. In a Word, the Archetypal Book of the Law, which uſed to be preſerved in the Temple, periſhed together with it and the Holy City by Fire: But Copies thereof had been continued by the Providential Appointment of Officers, ſet up for that very Purpoſe, who both by Duty and Inclination took care to preſerve them from Loſs and from Corruption.

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As to the *Pſalms*, their Antiquity and Genuineneſs has not, that I know of, been denied or queſtioned.

Nor has any Controverſy been moved in either of thoſe Reſpects, againſt any of the prophetick Writings, ſave thoſe of *Daniel*, whom it has been found no difficult Matter to defend, againſt the falſe and frivolous Cavils of Gainſayers.

Indeed the proper Antiquity of the Old Teſtament Prophecies, *i. e.* their Exiſtence long before the Events foretold, is the chief Point to be ſettled, in order to make the Completion of them a valid Evidence for the Divinity of the Chriſtian Religion. And of this we have one at leaſt unqueſtionable Proof from the *Greek* Tranſlation of the Old Teſtament Scriptures, commonly called the *Septuagint*; from whence the Prophecies, applied in the Goſpels and *Acts*, are chiefly taken, which Tranſlation was made more than 300 Years before the Times of Jeſus Chriſt.

In

In a Word, the Genuineneſs and Antiquity of the *Jewiſh* ſacred Writings, reſts on the ſame Foundation with that of all other ancient Books, *viz.* the uniform Tradition of all the intermediate Times; and therefore cannot be gainſaid upon any Principles, but what will equally affect the Hiſtory and Learning of all Ages, beſides our own.

Thus it appears, that, to uſe the Words of the Text, *Prophecy came not of old Time by the Will of Man: But holy Men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.*

And the Proof that the Hiſtorical Parts of the New Teſtament likewiſe, which contain the Completions of thoſe Prophecies, and the Fact of Miracles, were genuine, and every Way worthy of Credit, muſt be the Subject of future Lectures.

SER-

SERMON V.

Second Epiſtle of St. *Peter*, Chap. i. Verſe 16.

For we have not followed cunningly deviſed Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; but were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty and Glory.

IN former Diſcourſes on this Occaſion, I have ſtated and defended the great Proofs for the Truth and Divinity of the Chriſtian Religion from Miracles and Prophecy: And in my laſt Lecture I obſerved, that if any Thing elſe was neceſſary to this Argument, it muſt be to aſſert

the Genuineneſs of thoſe Books, wherein the Prophecies and their Completions are ſet down, and the Miracles are recorded, *i. e.* the Books of the Old Teſtament, and the hiſtorical Pieces of the New. And accordingly I then undertook to make good the Genuineneſs and Authenticity of the Old Teſtament Scripture in all its Branches, *viz.* the Law of *Moſes*, the Prophets, and the Pſalms, in each of which Diviſions our Lord affirms, that *Things were written concerning him*, Luk. xxiv. 44.

I am now to do the ſame by the Writings of the New Teſtament, eſpecially the hiſtorical Ones, in which the miraculous Proofs of Chriſtianity are recorded, and the Events ſet down, which compleated antient Prophecies concerning the Meſſiah, and which likewiſe are therein applied to their reſpective Predictions: Or, to ſpeak with St. *Peter* in the Text, that the Apoſtles *have not followed cunningly deviſed Fables, when they made known unto the World the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; *but were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty and Glory*.

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The Proof of the hiſtorical Truths contained in the New Teſtament, is of the ſame Kind with that, on which we give Credit to other anciently written Facts: And Hiſtories of all Sorts are then deemed credible,

Firſt, When the reputed Hiſtorians were properly qualified to write on the Subject they took in Hand: *Secondly*, When it appears that the Hiſtories in Queſtion were really, and *bona fide*, written by the reputed Authors ſo properly qualified, and not by others (of whoſe Qualifications we know nothing) under their Names: *Thirdly*, When ſuch Writings, as were at firſt confeſſedly credible and genuine, have been faithfully tranſmitted down to our Times.

And if it ſhall be found, as I truſt it will, that theſe three Notes of Credibility belong to the hiſtorical Parts of the New Teſtament in a more eminent Manner, than they do to any the moſt credible an-

cient Hiſtory whatever, the Truth of the Goſpels, and Acts of the Apoſtles, will remain undoubted.

Firſt then, I am to ſhew, that the reputed Authors of the ſacred Hiſtories laſt mentioned, were Perſons properly qualified to write on the Subjects they took in Hand.

Now the Qualifications which render a Writer of Hiſtory credible are, I preſume, theſe which follow.

Firſt, he muſt be one, againſt whoſe general Character for Veracity no Exception can be taken: For if he be a Man notorious for ſpeaking or writing Untruths, tho' he had every other due Qualification, no Dependance can be had on what he delivers for Fact, tho' it concern the moſt ordinary Occurrences.

Secondly, He muſt be one who had good Opportunities of knowing the Truth of the Facts he records, either by having been an Eye-

Eye-witneſs of them himſelf, or by having received them from other credible Perſons, that were. For if he was too late in Time to have ſeen the Events related by him, or had his Accounts of them from ſuch, concerning whoſe Veracity and Opportunities we know nothing, we cannot give entire Credit to what he delivers as Facts.

Thirdly, When theſe two Circumſtances unite in a Hiſtorian, he ought further to be a Man of Underſtanding ſufficient to diſtinguiſh real Facts from Appearances: For if thoſe pretended Facts are of ſuch a Nature, as that a plain and uneducated Perſon may be deceived in them, we have no Security that ſuch an Hiſtorian has not, in ſome Caſes, at leaſt delivered down to Poſterity his own Miſtakes for hiſtorical Certainties.

Fourthly, Thoſe Hiſtorians will always deſerve moſt Credit, who appear to have no corrupt Intereſt, or private Affection to ſerve, by the Matters they relate. For if their Hopes or Fears, their Love or Hate, may

be gratified by Misrelation, we cannot altogether depend upon it, that a Writer, tho' naturally honest and veracious, will mix none of his own Prejudices and Party-Judgments, in speaking to the Characters of Men and Things.

Let us then now consider, how far these four Qualifications agree with the Writers of the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles.

And first, whether their general Characters for Veracity were unexceptionable.

Their Names, as is known to every one, were *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*. Of these, *John*, was a Person of mean Occupation, but, for aught that we find to the contrary, of strict Truth and Honesty. The modest Manner in which he speaks of Things, that redound to his particular Credit, is very remarkable, never at such Times speaking of himself by Name. But Modesty and Veraciousness are almost inseparable Companions,

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as their oppoſite Qualities, Lying and Vanity, alſo are. St. *Matthew*'s firſt Profeſſion as a Publican, might ſeem to impeach his Truth and Probity, if he had not entirely redeemed it, by giving up a gainful Employment at the firſt Call of our Lord. For a Knave in a gainful Office, was hardly ever known to part with it on ſuch unpromiſing Conditions: And therefore we may fairly ſet down our firſt Evangeliſt, as one of thoſe few Publicans, whom the Opportunities of unlawful Gain could not corrupt or warp from his natural Integrity. *Mark* was deſcended of the Tribe of *Levi*, and the Line of the Prieſthood: His Converſion therefore to Chriſtianity, which was ſo generally oppoſed by the Deſcendents of *Aaron*, is a Preſumption in Favour of his natural Probity and Diſintereſtedneſs. Nor does any Objection lie againſt this Part of his Character, unleſs he was that *John*, whoſe Sirname was *Mark*, whom St. *Paul*, even tho' deſired by *Barnabas*, abſolutely refuſed to take with him when he went to viſit the Churches: Becauſe he had before departed from them from *Pam-*

philia, and went not with them to the Work. But this laſt was plainly a different Perſon from the Evangeliſt, tho' he has ſometimes been miſtaken for him. *Laſtly*, St. *Luke*, who wrote the Goſpel, which goes by his Name, and the Acts of the Apoſtles, labours under no known Blemiſh. His Education had been in the Study of Phyſick, to which, if we may credit *Simeon Metaphraſtes*, and an Inſcription ſaid to have been dug up at *Rome*, he added the Art of Painting. And ſure his having quitted thoſe gainful Arts, for the poor and then deſpiſed Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, beſpeaks him to have been one, with whom the Love of Truth outweighed all worldly Conſiderations. The Characters then of the four Evangeliſts, for Truth and Probity, being thus eſtabliſhed, let us,

In the ſecond Place enquire, what Opportunities they had of knowing the Truth of the Things they have recorded, concerning Chriſt and his Apoſtles. Two of the Evangeliſts, St. *Matthew* and St. *John*, were Companions of our Lord, Eye and Ear-

Ear-witneſſes to what he did, ſaid, and ſuffered. They alſo knew the bleſſed Virgin his Mother, from whom they had Opportunities of learning the former Part of their Maſter's Hiſtory, from his miraculous Conception to the Time they were called to be his Diſciples and conſtant Attendants. As for the other two, St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*, tho' we cannot with Certainty affirm, that they ſaw and heard the Things they have delivered, yet ſure we are, that they were the Companions of St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, upon whoſe Recommendation they probably undertook to write, and to whoſe Correction doubtleſs they ſubmitted what they had written. The Acts of the Apoſtles were penned by St. *Luke*, who was an Attendant upon St. *Paul* in his Travels, who ſaw the greateſt Part of the Facts he mentions, and heard the Preachings of the Apoſtles. He therefore was an Hiſtorian above all juſt Exception, with Regard to the Opportunities he had of knowing the Certainty of the Things about which he wrote. And indeed, conſidering how few profane Hiſtorians are extant, who were

equal to the ſacred ones in this Reſpect, we may pronounce the latter to be incomparably the moſt veritable and authentick. For, excepting *Cæſar*, and one or two more, who wrote Commentaries of their own Exploits, or the Hiſtory of their own Times, the Generality of the ancient Hiſtorians were greatly diſtant, both in Age and Place, from the Events of which they treat: So that it can proceed from nothing but the utmoſt Partiality, when any one ſhall take profane Hiſtory upon Content, and yet reject the Narratives of the New Teſtament that are delivered down to us by Perſons, who, for the moſt Part, write from the Dictates of their own Senſes.

The third Note of a credible Hiſtory is, when the Facts therein ſpoken of are ſuch, as a Man of Honeſty and plain Senſe cannot eaſily be deceived in. Superſtition, and Credulity, and Strength of Imagination, will, in ſome Caſes, make Appearances to paſs for Realities: And of this Kind are moſt of the Prodigies delivered, both by *Greek* and *Roman* Writers, but eſpecially

pecially the latter. But the Events of the Goſpel Hiſtory, as likewiſe thoſe of the Acts of the Apoſtles, tho' equally ſtrange and preternatural, were of ſuch a Kind, as no Beholder could miſtake or miſapprehend. For Inſtance, a Perſon who ſees a blind Man miraculouſly and inſtantaneouſly reſtored to his Sight, or a lame Man to the Uſe of his Feet, or a ſick Man reſtored on a ſudden to perfect Health, may as ſecurely depend on the Information of his Senſes, in all, or any of theſe Inſtances, as he can in the plaineſt and moſt ordinary Occurrences. Theſe Things are not like uncommon Phænomena in the Heavens, juſt preſented to the View, and then altogether withdrawn again, ſo as that the Spectators want Time to form a right Judgment of them, by long and careful Inſpection. For the Men, on whom ſuch wonderful Changes were wrought by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, lived and converſed, and ſhewed themſelves to the World for ſeveral Years, affording, all that Time, Opportunities to the Curious, as well as to the Diffident and Incredulous, to inquire into

their Caſe, and be ſatisfied, that the Alteration effected in them was both real and miraculous: In a Word, our outward Senſes properly diſpoſed and acted upon thro' a due Medium, do as certainly inform us of ſtrange and ſtupendous Events, as of common ones; and therefore an honeſt Man, reporting preternatural Incidents upon ſuch Information, equally deſerves to be credited, as when he tells of Things which happen every Day: So that the ſacred Hiſtorians, being honeſt in themſelves, well informed of the Subjects on which they treat, and ſpeaking of Things, to which the Senſes of Mankind rightly diſpoſed do give infallible Teſtimony, are worthy of entire Credit.

Eſpecially, if (which is the fourth and laſt Qualification) it ſhall appear, that they had no private Intereſt or Affection to ſerve by their Relations. It is an Obſervation too well known by frequent Experience, that Men, who are to be credited in every other Reſpect, are yet not entirely to be depended upon as to Points, in which Par-

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ty Prejudices and private Affections mix themſelves. And doubtleſs, the Evangeliſts were warmly and zealouſly affected to that Cauſe, the Hiſtory of which they have delivered to the World. But notwithſtanding this, they ſtand clear from all Suſpicion of partial Writing: For he, who ſtrains a Point thro' private Affection, or Party Prejudice, ſuppoſing he is detected, incurs no Loſs, beſides that of Character; whereas the Evangeliſts ſtaked their Lives, as well as their Fame, for the Truth of their Hiſtories. Nay, indeed, to come up to the Truth of their Caſe, I ſhould have ſaid, that they wrote under a certain Expectation of being called upon to ſeal what they wrote with their Blood, whether it were true or falſe. It is therefore utterly incredible, that any Men, compiling Hiſtories under ſuch Circumſtances, ſhould in the leaſt depart from the Truth, thro' the Byaſs of Prejudice, or Party Affection. They had ſeen St. *Stephen* ſtoned, and *James* killed with the Sword, beſides many others of inferior Note, for preaching the Truths of Chriſt: They ſaw themſelves

ſelves likewiſe, on the ſame Account, in Jeopardy every Hour, and had no Reaſon to believe, that by committing to Writing, and publiſhing the wonderful Things of God, the Danger would be at all leſſened, but rather, on the contrary, that they ſhould thereby more expoſe themſelves to the Malice of their powerful Enemies. One of theſe Hiſtorians, St. *John*, if we may believe a very ancient Eccleſiaſtical Tradition, before he wrote the Goſpel, which goes under his Name, had miraculouſly eſcaped being ſcalded to Death in a Cauldron of boiling Oil, to which he was ſentenced under *Domitian* the Emperor, for having acted the Part only of a preaching Evangeliſt; and could he reaſonably hope for better Treatment, after becoming the Author of a written Goſpel? All theſe Things then being laid together, there remains no Room to doubt the Veracity of the New Teſtament Hiſtorians. Their Narratives may be conſidered, in ſome Meaſure, as the Words of dying Men, clear from the Prejudices of Party, Self-Intereſt, or other human Affections; And quite agree-

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able to these reasonable Presumptions is the Turn of the sacred Story. We see nothing therein artful or sophistical, but Facts delivered with the utmost Plainness and Simplicity. The Authors write like Men that were uninfluenced, either by Hopes or Fears. Truth was their perpetual Aim, whether it made for or against them. The human Fears of our Lord, on the Apprehension of his approaching Death, and his uncommon Agonies arising from thence, are honestly related, without the least Softening or Palliation. This indeed was an Infirmity without a Fault, tho', to the Eye of a carnal Reasoner, it might appear disparaging. But the Apostles, and first Followers of our Lord, had their criminal, as well as their innocent Weaknesses, some before, and others after they were admitted into the Houshold of Faith. Such were the sinful Courses of *Mary Magdalene*, the vindictive Spirit which appeared in the Sons of *Zebedee* towards the unhospitable *Samaritans*, and likewise the unreasonable Ambition of their Mother, expressed in that Desire of hers to our Lord,

that

that her Sons might be preferred to the higheſt Honours of his Kingdom, which ſhe erroneouſly ſuppoſed would prove merely ſecular. To theſe we may add the Diſputes among the Diſciples, who ſhould be the greateſt; their cowardly Deſertion of our Lord at his Apprehenſion; the repeated Denial of him by *Peter*, attended with falſe Oaths and bitter Execrations; the Difficulty with which the Diſciples embraced the firſt News of Chriſt's Reſurrection; and the exceſſive Incredulity of *Thomas*, who declared that nothing ſhort of the Teſtimony of all his Senſes, ſhould extort from him a Belief, that his Maſter was riſen again according to his own clear Prediction. To this ſame Claſs alſo may be reduced the violent Diſſention between *Paul* and *Barnabas*, concerning *John*, whoſe Sirname was *Mark*. *Laſtly*, the Diſſimulation of St. *Peter*, on Account of which St. *Paul* withſtood him to the Face at *Antioch*. But all theſe Things are punctually related by the ſacred Writers, nor have we the leaſt Reaſon to ſuppoſe, that they have concealed any Faults, or e-

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ven Infirmities, in the Men of their own Side. But theſe are ſuch Evidences of Honeſty and Impartiality in the Goſpel Hiſtorians, as muſt induce all indifferent Judges to determine in their Favour. Beſides, the Characters of the Perſons given by the ſacred Writers, are, in ſome Meaſure, confirmed by collateral Evidence from profane Hiſtory, whether they were Friends or Enemies. Thus, for Inſtance, the Sanctity and miraculous Power of Jeſus Chriſt, was atteſted to by *Pilate*, his Judge, in Writings to the Emperor *Tiberius*, which, tho' now no longer extant, were appealed to by *Tertullian*, in leſs than two hundred Years after, in his Apology, as then ſubſiſting in the Archives at *Rome*. And had this been a falſe or miſtaken Fact, the *Roman* Government were too deeply intereſted in the Diſcovery, to have ſuffered it to paſs, as they plainly did, without Contradiction. Indeed it would be hard to ſay, which of the two Suppoſitions would be moſt abſurd, that *Tertullian* ſhould expoſe the Chriſtian Cauſe, then under a grievous Perſecution, by Appeal to a Writing in the

the Hands of his Enemies, that never had a Being; or that they, in ſuch a Caſe, ſhould be ſo far wanting to themſelves, and the Honour of their own Proceedings againſt the Chriſtians, as not to produce the genuine Acts of *Pilate*, and confront the Aſſurance of the Apologiſt, had ſuch a Thing been in their Power: And yet, unleſs both theſe Abſurdities happened, the Acts of *Pilate* muſt remain an Evidence for ever, that *Pontius Pilate* not only found no Fault in our Saviour Chriſt, as the Goſpels repreſent him to have ſaid at his Arraignment, but alſo that he thought him to be a Perſon of godlike Power and Perfections.

To the written Teſtimony of *Pilate*, now loſt, tho' once undoubtedly ſubſiſting, may be added the yet extant one of *Joſephus*, the *Jewiſh* Hiſtorian. A more honourable Character could not have been given of Chriſt, by one of his Followers, than that beſtowed on him in the Writings of *Joſephus*. And, indeed, this is a Circumſtance, which, with ſome even learned Chri-

Chriſtians, has diſcredited the Paſſage, and made it ſuſpected for the Addition of ſome Chriſtian, more zealous than honeſt or diſcreet. But this is reaſoning againſt a plain Fact: For this diſputed Paſſage is quoted by *Euſebius* out of *Joſephus*, and is not wanting in any one known Manuſcript. The Style of the Paſſage is alſo thoroughly Helleniſtical; and which is more, every Phraſe and Expreſſion made uſe of therein, has been found in other Parts of *Joſephus*, to ſuch a Nicety and Exactneſs, as no Impoſtor ever could, or did come up to. Add to this, that the ſame *Joſephus*, in the twentieth Book of his Antiquities, mentioning the Apoſtle *James the Leſs*, calls him the Brother of Jeſus called the Chriſt. Which ſuppoſes that he had ſpoken of Jeſus more fully before: Otherwiſe, *Joſephus* muſt have been abſurd enough to deſcribe one unknown Perſon by his Relation to another, with whom his Readers were, or might be equally unacquainted. And yet, unleſs we allow the Paſſage in diſpute to be genuine, this is the firſt Time we find Jeſus mentioned by *Joſephus*. A-

gainſt all this plain Evidence, the Enemies to the Paſſage have nothing to oppoſe but negative Evidence, ſuch as the Silence of ancienter Chriſtian Writers concerning this Teſtimony, and *Joſephus*'s continuing a *Jew* after he had given it. But neither of theſe can be ſufficient to ſhake its Credit with any one that conſiders, that the firſt of theſe might happen thro' Cauſes eaſy to be aſſigned, and the Force of Prejudices will account for the latter; whilſt it is utterly incredible, and altogether unaccountable, that an Interpolation like this ſhould ever paſs unobſerved by either *Jews* or *Gentiles*, neither of which were Strangers to *Joſephus*'s Writings, and that no one Copy ſhould come down pure to our Times.

The ſame *Joſephus* ſpeaks alſo of *John Baptiſt*, with the utmoſt Veneration, owns his Character as a Baptiſt, and ſpeaks of his Death in the ſame Manner as the Goſpel does.

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He makes alſo honourable Mention of *James the Leſs*, terming him a moſt juſt or righteous Perſon, and making the Siege of *Jeruſalem*, which followed ſoon after, a Judgment from God on its Inhabitants, for putting to Death ſo excellent a Perſon.

Laſtly, he ſpeaks likewiſe with great Commendation of *Manaen*, the Foſter Brother of *Herod* the *Tetrarch*, of whom Mention is made, *Acts*, *Chap.* xiii. *Ver.* 1. as one of the Chriſtian Prophets and Teachers at *Antioch*, unto whom, as they miniſtred and faſted, the Holy Ghoſt gave a Commandment to ſeparate *Barnabas* and *Saul* for the Work whereunto he had called them.

And as the good, ſo likewiſe the bad or diſadvantageous Characters given of Perſons by the Hiſtorians of the New Teſtament, are never contradicted, and ſometimes are confirmed by concurrent profane Hiſtories.

E. G. The three *Herods*, the firſt of whom was ſirnamed *the Great*, who murdered the Infants; the ſecond *Herod Antipas*, who put to Death *John the Baptiſt*, and the third *Herod Agrippa*, who ſlew *James* with the Sword, have nothing ſaid of them in the *Goſpels* and *Acts*, but what ſuits with the Characters given to each of them in *Joſephus*; and the cruel Slaughter made of the Infants by the former of theſe *Herods*, is atteſted to by *Macrobius*, a *Pagan* Hiſtorian.

The Character alſo of *Felix*, the *Roman* Governor, in *Tacitus*, exactly tallies with his Behaviour to St. *Paul*.

Upon the Whole therefore, the ſacred Hiſtorians appear to have given Characters of Perſons and Things with the utmoſt Impartiality. Neither Love nor Hate, neither Hopes nor Fears, ſeem to have given the leaſt Byaſs to the Courſe of the Narratives they have left behind them. And therefore upon this, as well as other Accounts, were

were naturally qualified to give a juſt and faithful Relation of the Matters, concerning which they are ſaid to have written.

The next Point therefore to be made good is, that the reputed Authors of the Hiſtorical Books in the New Teſtament, who appear ſo well qualified, were really, and *bona Fide*, the Authors of thoſe Books. But this muſt, God willing, be the Subject of my next Lecture.

SERMON VI.

Second Epiſtle of St. *Peter*, Chap. i. Verſe 16.

For we have not followed cunningly deviſed Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; but were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty and Glory.

ON Occaſion of theſe Words in my laſt Diſcourſe, I propoſed to defend the Hiſtorical Part of the New Teſtament, in which the two great Evidences for Chriſtianity, *viz.* Miracles and Prophecies fulfilled, are contained.

And I then told you, that Hiſtories of all Kinds were then deemed worthy of Credit: *Firſt*, When their reputed Authors were properly qualified to do Juſtice to the Subject they took in Hand. *Secondly*, When it appears out of Doubt, that the Hiſtories in Queſtion were really, and *bona fide*, written by the reputed Authors ſo properly qualified. *Thirdly*, When ſuch Hiſtories, as were at firſt confeſſedly both credible and genuine, have been in the main faithfully tranſmitted down to our Times.

The firſt of theſe Marks or Notes of credible Hiſtory, I then proved to belong to the four Goſpels, and to the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, *viz.* that *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* were properly qualified to write true Hiſtories of the Subjects they took in Hand.

I now therefore proceed in the ſecond Place to make it appear, that the ſacred Hiſtories, above ſpecified, were really, and *bona*

bona fide, written by the Authors whoſe Names they carry, and whoſe Qualifications for writing truly have already been amply ſet forth.

I conceive it will be allowed me, that the Queſtion concerning the Genuineneſs of the New Teſtament Hiſtories, muſt be determined upon the very ſame Principles on which we decide for the Genuineneſs of other ancient Books.

Now we never queſtion the Genuineſs of ſuch Books.

Firſt, When they contain nothing which happened in Times later than thoſe wherein their reputed Authors lived.

Secondly, When the Style of the Books agrees with the Circumſtances of the Perſons whoſe Names they bear.

Thirdly, and above all, When ſuch Writers, as live in or neareſt to the Times in which they were written, invariably, or however

however generally aſcribe them to the Perſons whoſe Names they at preſent go under, or at leaſt adjudge them to no other Authors.

But all theſe Characteriſticks of Genuineneſs belong to the four Goſpels and to the *Acts* of the Apoſtles.

For *Firſt*, they contain nothing which happened later than the Times therein treated of, or than thoſe of their reputed Authors. Againſt this I know of but two Objections.

The firſt of which affects the Goſpel of St. *Luke*, and is as follows: That Evangeliſt makes our Lord's Birth to have happened in the Days of *Herod* the King of *Judah*, *i. e.* of *Herod* the Great. At the ſame Time he gives us another Æra of this Event, making it to have fallen out in the Days of the Taxing, which Taxing is ſaid to have been made when *Cyrenius* was Governor of *Syria*. But the Enemies to the ſacred Hiſtory think they have diſcovered, that

that the Taxation under *Cyrenius* was impoſed and gathered about twelve Years after, when, according to *Joſephus Quirinus*, he was made Prefect of *Syria*, and many Years after the Death of *Herod* the Great, But it has fully been made out by learned Men, that St. *Luke* and *Joſephus* ſpeak of different Events, tho' both happened under the ſame *Cyrenius*. The former, ſpoken of by St. *Luke*, was only a Cenſus or Enrollment of Perſons and Eſtates, without a Demand of Tribute; the latter a Levy or Tax, actually gathered, and probably the ſame with what is mentioned by *Gamaliel* in the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, when *Judas* of *Galilee* drew ſo many People after him into Sedition and Rebellion, in the Days of the Taxing.

The ſecond Objection is levelled againſt the Goſpel of St. *Matthew*, from *Chap.* xxiii. 25. where we find theſe Words ſpoken by our Saviour in the Lamentation over *Jeruſalem*. *That upon you may come all the righteous Blood ſhed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel, unto the Blood of Zacharias the Son of Barachias, whom*

whom ye ſlew between the Temple and the Altar.

" Now, ſay the Enemies to the Goſpel, " this *Zacharias*, as we learn from *Joſe-* " *phus*, was ſlain in the Commotions pre- " ceding the Siege and Deſtruction of *Je-* " *ruſalem*, which fell out *An.* 70. ſome " Years after the Writing of this Goſpel, " and almoſt forty Years after Chriſt is " ſuppoſed to have uttered theſe Words."

But why muſt the *Zacharias*, ſpoken of by our Saviour, I ſay, why muſt he needs be the *Zacharias* of *Joſephus*, and no other? Eſpecially when we find another of this very Name, 2 *Chron.* xxiv. 20. a Prophet, whom the *Jews* put to Death in the Court of the Lord's Houſe many hundred Years before our Lord's Time, who therefore might be, and who moſt probably was the *Zacharias* ſpoken of by him.

We ſhall perhaps be told, that this could not be, becauſe the *Zacharias* in St. *Matthew* is called by Chriſt the Son of *Barachias*:

chias : Whereas the *Zacharias* of the *Chronicles* is ſaid therein to have been, not the Son of *Barachias*, but of *Jehojada*, who therefore muſt have been a different Perſon.

But how do the Objectors know, that the Father of *Zacharias*, of whom we read in the ſecond Book of *Chronicles*, beſides the Name of *Jehojada*, might alſo have that of *Barachias?*

Nothing is more common in Scripture, than for the ſame Perſon to be ſpoken of under different Names, and therefore, till the Objectors can ſhew that this was not the Caſe of *Jehojada*, he may be the very Perſon whom our Saviour mentions under the Name of *Barachias*, and then the Objection falls of Courſe.

Beſides, as the *Zacharias*, in the Book of *Chronicles*, is not affirmed to be the Son of *Barachias*, but of *Jehojada :* So the *Zacharias* of *Joſephus* is not called by him the Son of *Barachias*, but of *Baruchus*, which

which, tho' ſomewhat alike in Sound, are quite different Names.

Laſtly, There is one Circumſtance which attended the Death of *Zacharias*, in the Hiſtory of the *Chronicles*, which no Man can compare with the Occaſion of our Lord's Words, in the 23d *Chap.* of St. *Matthew*, without perceiving him to be the *Zacharias* there ſpoken of: For Chriſt mentions a *Zacharias*, the ſhedding of whoſe Blood, as well as that of *Abel*'s, was emphatically to be required. But as *Abel*'s Blood cried from the Earth for Vengeance againſt his Murderer: So when *Zacharias* the Prophet was put to Death by the *Jews*, the Author of the ſecond Book of *Chronicles* informs us, that he left this Burden upon his Murderers. *The Lord look upon it, and require it.* He therefore was the *Zacharias* proper to the Words of our Lord, and exactly anſwering the Deſign of them. And thus the ſecond Cavil againſt the Genuineneſs of the Goſpels is effectually removed out of our Way. And the Evangeliſts appear to have written nothing but

but what falls within the Time aſſigned by them, or later than the Time in which they are ſuppoſed to have lived and written.

Let us now conſider, *Secondly*, How far the ſecond Mark of Genuineneſs is applicable to the ſacred Hiſtories, by examining whether the Style, in the Language and Manner of it, be ſuch as the reputed Authors of them might be ſuppoſed to make uſe of.

Three of the ſacred Writers were *Jews* born, *viz.* *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *John*. It was natural therefore to expect that they writing in *Greek*, which was not their native Language, ſhould not always expreſs themſelves with the ſame Purity, which is found in the Writings of ſuch as were *Greeks* by Birth. Men under the Circumſtances of theſe three Evangeliſts, if left to the Choice of their own Expreſſions, would introduce frequently the Idiom of their own native Speech, and ſometimes of other Languages, to which they had been accuſtomed.

ſtomed. As to the fourth Evangeliſt, St. *Luke*, he was not a *Jew* born, but became ſuch by Proſelytiſm, and was a Native of *Antioch*, a City of *Syria*, and an Univerſity, where probably he improved himſelf in the Language and the Arts of *Greece*. Such a Perſon therefore would in all Likelihood expreſs himſelf in purer *Greek* than the *Hebrew* Evangeliſts, and yet his Language could not be ſuppoſed to be wholly free from *Syriack* Idioms, thro' the Prejudices of his native Place and Language. And agreeable to all this is the real State of the ſacred Hiſtories: St. *Matthew*, who never left the Holy Land till the Writing of the Goſpel, which goes by his Name, writes like a *Hebrew* of the *Hebrews*, who at that Time had never viſited any foreign Climate, generally clothing *Hebrew* and *Syriack* Modes of Speech in a *Greek* Garb, and citing the Old Teſtament, principally according to the *Hebrew* Original, rather than the *Greek* Verſion, which goes by the Name of the *Septuagint*.

St.

St. *Mark*, who wrote his Gospel after some stay made at *Rome*, abounds less with *Hebraisms* and *Syriasms*, than St. *Matthew*, tho' still retaining a sufficient Number of them; and having by his Abode at *Rome* learnt in some Measure the *Latin* Tongue, now and then expresses the Military Affairs of the *Roman* Soldiers at *Jerusalem* in their own Words, written according to the *Greek* Spelling and Termination.

St. *John* wrote his Gospel after many Years Absence from his native Country, and tho' probably, on that Account, he has fewer Mixtures of the *Eastern* Idiom in his Style, than either of the former Evangelists, yet has enough of this Kind to bespeak and point out his Extraction. Besides this, the Writer of the Gospel, which goes under the Name of St. *John*, does, towards the latter End of it, point himself to be that very Person. For plain it is, that the Person who in this Gospel is frequently spoken of under the Periphrasis of being the Disciple whom Jesus loved, was

John. Having therefore related St. *Peter*'s Queſtion to our Lord concerning the beloved Diſciple, together with our Lord's Anſwer, he immediately ſubjoins, *This is the Diſciple which teſtifieth of theſe Things, and wrote theſe Things, and we know that his Teſtimony is true.*

Laſtly, the Goſpel according to St. *Luke* exactly tallies with the Circumſtances of his Birth, Religion, and Education, being juſt ſuch a one as might be expected from all theſe. It is remarkable for greater Purity of Style, than the other ſacred Writings, and for abounding leſs with *Hebraiſms*, and for cloſely following the *Septuagint* Tranſlation of the Old Teſtament, which was uſed by the Helleniſt *Jews*. And yet there are in it plain Indications of a Writer, who was no *Greek* by Birth, but who was converſant in the *Greek* of the Synagogue, and whoſe native Tongue was *Syriack*.

Thus we ſee that the very Imperfections, as they are by ſome accounted, in the Style of the ſacred Hiſtories, prove to their Ad-

vantage, ſupplying us with indubitable Proofs of their Genuineneſs; whereas had they been penned in the chaſte *Athenian* Taſte, we ſhould have been harder put to it to aſcertain them to their reputed Authors, who naturally had not Talents for compoſing elegantly in that noble and copious Language. And I cannot therefore but hope, that the Lovers of *Greek* Propriety will be leſs ſollicitous to vindicate the Purity of the Style of the *Greek* Teſtament; both becauſe it is a Deſign which never can wholly ſucceed, and becauſe, if it ſhould, Religion would rather ſuffer, than be benefited thereby.

The third, the laſt, and principal Note of the Genuineneſs of ancient Books is, when ſuch Writers, as live in or neareſt the Times in which thoſe Books were written, invariably, or, however, generally aſcribe them to the Perſons whoſe Names they at preſent go under, or at leaſt adjudge them to no other. The Reaſon of this Mark is obvious, *viz.* that the nearer a Writer is in Time to the Piece, whoſe Ge-

nuineneſs we inquire after, the better Opportunities he muſt have of informing himſelf concerning its Authors; and where the Generality of ſuch Writers agree in their Report, their Evidence is irreſiſtible.

But this Note alſo, in the ſtrongeſt Manner, belongs to the four Goſpels, and to the *Acts* of the bleſſed Apoſtles.

For that St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* were the Authors of Goſpels, we learn from *Papias*, who flouriſhed within fifty Years after thoſe Goſpels came abroad, and who lived in the Apoſtolical Age itſelf. A little later than the Middle of the ſecond Age, and within about one hundred Years after the earlieſt of the Church's Goſpels, flouriſhed *Irenæus*, the firſt who cites the four Goſpels by Name. He had been inſtructed by *Polycarp*, who had converſed with St. *John*: So that his Evidence for the Genuineneſs of the four Goſpels, may be reſolved into that of the Apoſtolical Age itſelf. Later, but ſtill in the ſecond Century, *Clemens* of *Alexandria*, and *Tertul-*

lian concur in the ſame Teſtimony. For the Truth of which it is worth remarking, that theſe three eminent and early Fathers do in the ſtrongeſt Manner appeal, not to their Predeceſſors ſingly, but to the Tradition of Churches, nor to thoſe of leſſer Note, but even to the Apoſtolical Sees, traced up to the Apoſtles their Founders. They affirm of the four Goſpels, that they, under their preſent Titles, were with the Church *a primordio*, *i. e.* from the Beginning, or from their firſt Publication. Every ſucceeding Biſhop, in thoſe Churches, reſpectively received this Tradition from his Predeceſſor, and handed it down to him that came after. And on theſe unſhaken Principles do the Writers of the third Century aſcribe the Goſpels and *Acts* of the Apoſtles to their reſpective Authors: Nor does any one Catholick Writer, from thoſe early Days to our own Times, queſtion the Genuineneſs of thoſe ſacred Hiſtories. Some Parts of the New Teſtament Canon were later received into the Code of the Church than others, being doubted of by ſome particular Churches. But as to the Hiſtorical

Books, with which we are now concerned, no Catalogue of Scriptures wanted them, but they were read and received throughout the Chriſtian World for genuine and inſpired. And certainly the Doubts and Demurs of particular Churches to ſome of the New Teſtament Scriptures, greatly ſtrengthens their Evidence to the Genuineneſs of thoſe in which the Church Univerſal was agreed. For it ſhews, that in thoſe Days Chriſtians were not implicit Believers in ſuch Points, but judged for themſelves; receiving no Book as Genuine and Canonical, upon the mere Authority of Churches, how great or ancient ſoever they might be. From whence we may juſtly conclude, that if the Authenticity of the four Goſpels and the *Acts* of the Apoſtles had not been eſtabliſhed beyond all reaſonable Contradiction, they would no more have met with an univerſal Reception from the Beginning, than the doubted Part of the Canon did. If any one therefore has thought it ſtrange, that ever the divine Providence ſhould ſuffer any Part of the Primitive Church to have been doubtful concerning ſome Books of

of unqueſtionable Inſpiration, he muſt now be convinced, that it was done for the greater Confirmation of thoſe, wherein the entire Body of Chriſtians were agreed; which was an End worthy of Providence, which at the ſame Time took care at laſt to remove all Prejudices, and to make way for the Reception of the whole Canon of Scripture, as it now ſtands.

But to return to my main Subject. Having ſhewn, that the Catholick Writers, neareſt in Time to the Age of the Goſpels, have unanimouſly aſcribed them to the Authors whoſe Names they bear, and that no ſound Chriſtian has ſince pretended to diſpute their Genuineneſs, I might now conclude the preſent Head, but that it may perhaps be expected I ſhould give ſome Account, what were the Sentiments of the Enemies to the Chriſtian Name, and likewiſe thoſe of heretical Chriſtians on this Subject.

As to the former of theſe then, we do not find that any one ancient Antichriſtian

Writer ever attempted to call in Queſtion the Genuineneſs of the Goſpels or *Acts*. It ſhould be remembered, at the ſame Time, that *Celſus*, *Porphyry*, and *Julian the Apoſtate* had too much Zeal againſt Chriſtianity to omit any Method of Argumentation, that would diſtreſs or diſparage it; and that they had too much Sagacity not to perceive that nothing could hurt it more, than to render its principal Writings of doubtful Credit and Genuineneſs. That they therefore ſhould never make the leaſt Attempt this Way, is an invincible Preſumption, that the Thing was utterly impracticable; that not the leaſt Suſpicion of Spurioufneſs could be fixed on the Holy Goſpels, and that their Genuineneſs was unqueſtionable.

More than this, the laſt of the above-named Antichriſtian Writers, and on many Accounts the moſt conſiderable of them, gives a poſitive Evidence in favour of the four Goſpels, admitting them to have been written by the very Perſons to whom the Church has always juſtly aſcribed them: I mean

Julian

Julian the Apoſtate. He knew the utmoſt that could be ſaid for and againſt the Genuineneſs of theſe and all other Canonical Books, having, in ſhew at leaſt, profeſſed Chriſtianity, and even officiated in one of the lower Orders of the Church: For ſuch a one, therefore, writing profeſſedly againſt the Religion of our Lord, with all the Rage and Malice that Apoſtacy could inſpire, to own that *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* were the Authors of the Goſpels, which go under their reſpective Names, is an Evidence above all Exception or Contradiction.

As to Hereticks, ancient and modern, tho' ſome of the former Kind denied the Authority of all the Church's Goſpels, yet none of them queſtioned their Genuineneſs, ſave *Manes* and his Followers in the third Century. And theſe pretended to no Sort of Evidence of the Spuriouſneſs of the Goſpels, either internal or external, but only affirmed the Thing as revealed to them by their Paraclet, by whom they gave out that they were inſpired. Nor did any, after theſe mad-brained Enthuſiaſts, queſtion the Genuineneſs of the Goſpels, till the

ſixteenth

ſixteenth Century, when the *Anabaptiſts* in *Germany*, on much the ſame weak and enthuſiaſtick Pretences, denied that they were written by the four reputed Evangeliſts.

What makes the Conceſſions of the early Hereticks, in this Point, the more important is, that they were conſtrained to deny the Authority of the Goſpels, whilſt they admitted them to be genuine: Whereas, if the Truth would have permitted it, the more rational Way had been to have founded their Rejection of the Goſpels on their being ſpurious. But this being not controvertible, the Hereticks were forced to excuſe their ſetting aſide the Church's Goſpels, upon Pretences that were equally immodeſt and abſurd. They gave out that the Apoſtles preached before they had a perfect Knowledge: They denied that the Truth could be learned from the Scriptures, without the Help of a Tradition, whereof they alone had the Cuſtody. They boaſted themſelves to be wiſer than the Apoſtles, and that they alone found out the ſincere

ſincere Truth, whilſt the Apoſtles blended the Law with the Doctrines of our Saviour, with more to the ſame Purpoſe. If then theſe Hereticks, moſt of whom lived in the next Succeſſion to the Apoſtles, for want of Objections to the Genuineneſs of the received Goſpels, were forced to ſet aſide their Authority upon the monſtrous Principles above ſpecified; no one ſurely, at this Diſtance of Time, can rationally account them ſpurious.

It muſt not be concealed that an Attempt has of late Years been made to ſet aſide the Genuineneſs of the firſt Goſpel, that, according to St. *Matthew*, under a Pretence that it went under many other different Titles in the firſt Age of Chriſtianity; which would evince, that the Ancients were utterly at a Loſs to whom to aſcribe this Goſpel.

But upon Inquiry the Fact is found to be falſe, no Evidence appearing for the firſt Goſpel's being aſcribed to any one but St. *Matthew*, in the firſt, ſecond, or third Age of Chriſtianity. In the fourth Age indeed

Jerom

Jerom and *Epiphanius* ſuppoſed the Goſpel according to the *Hebrews*, and the *Nazarene* Goſpel, with ſome Variations, to have been the *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew*: But all the while thoſe Fathers believed it, tho' going under the other Names, to have been the genuine Work of St. *Matthew*.

However, plain it is, from the Fragments of the Goſpel, according to the *Hebrews*, yet preſerved, that both thoſe Fathers miſtook, when they ſpake of it as the *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew*. For from thoſe Fragments it appears widely different from St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, and to have come much nearer to that of St. *Luke*, than to any of the other four.

Thus I think it appears, that the ſacred Hiſtory of the New Teſtament, contained in the Goſpels and Acts of the Apoſtles, have all the Notes and Characteriſticks of Genuineneſs, which uſe to aſcertain ancient Writings to the Authors whoſe Names they bear. As

Firſt,

First, They contain nothing later in Time than the Age of their reputed Authors.

Secondly, That the Style is such as those Authors would naturally use, when they should undertake to write in *Greek*.

Thirdly, That the Writers, who lived nearest to the Times in which those Histories were written, invariably ascribe them to the Persons whose Names they now go under, or at least adjudge them to no others. The Conclusion from whence is, that the sacred Histories, when first written, were credible and genuine Narratives.

And nothing is now wanting to evince, that they are yet such, but a Proof, that those Writings have been, in the main, faithfully transmitted down to the present Times.

But that must be defered to the next Opportunity.

SER-

SERMON VII.

Second Epiſtle of St. *Peter*, Chap. i. Verſe 16.

For we have not followed cunningly deviſed Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; but were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty and Glory.

I HAVE, in the Courſe of former Lectures, ſhewn,

Firſt, That the reputed Authors of the four *Goſpels*, and of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, were properly qualified to write the Hiſtories that are contained in thoſe Books.

Secondly,

Secondly, That thoſe reputed Authors, ſo well qualified to do Juſtice to the Subjects concerning which they wrote, were really the Compilers of the Hiſtories reſpectively aſcribed to them.

Nothing therefore remains to be done, for eſtabliſhing the Credibility of thoſe Hiſtories, as now extant, but to prove, in the third and laſt Place, that thoſe Hiſtories, which, in their firſt Eſtate were thus credible and genuine, have been, in the Main, faithfully tranſmitted and conveyed down to the preſent Times.

And of this we have infinitely better Evidence, than we have for the Conveyance of any other Hiſtories whatever.

For firſt, whereas other ancient Hiſtories were but of little Concern to the ſeveral Ages, thro' which they have paſſed to us, and conſequently we have, by no Means, an Aſſurance, that no material Alterations have been made therein: The ſacred

cred Hiſtories of the New Teſtament were of the utmoſt Conſequence to every Age of Chriſtians, and therefore all imaginable Care may be preſumed to have been employed to preſerve them, in the Main, pure and unaltered. Beſides, they were Books to which daily Recourſe were had, either for the Conduct of private Chriſtians, or for publick Inſtruction in their ſolemn Aſſemblies; ſo that no Additions or Defalcations could be made in them, but what muſt have been immediately perceived and remedied. Such alſo was the Zeal of Chriſtians in all Ages for thoſe holy Books, and ſo great their Reverence for the Authors of them, that they would have parted with their Lives, rather than have permitted any known Changes to have been made therein. Indeed it is ſcarce credible, how jealous the early Chriſtians were of Variations in the minuteſt Inſtances, from what they had been uſed to hear as Part of Scripture. One remarkable Example of which I ſhall here give you. You muſt know then, that St. *Jerom* corrected the old *Latin* Tranſlation of the Old Teſta-

ment, or rather made a new One, that ſhould be more conformable to the *Hebrew* Original, than the *Latin* Verſion then in Uſe, which had exactly followed the *Greek* of the *Septuagint*. Now, among other Differences, which hence aroſe between the old and new *Latin* Verſion, one happened in the Prophet *Jonah*; where, for what in our *Engliſh* Tranſlation is read a *Gourd*, the old *Latin* rendered *Cucurbita*, which *Jerom*'s *Latin* changed into *Hædera:* Which of theſe was the more proper Verſion, is not our preſent Buſineſs to determine, nor did it concern any Point of Doctrine or Morality, which was to be preferred to the other. But yet this Alteration had like to have produced great Miſchiefs in the Church; an Account whereof we have in an Epiſtle from *Auſtin* to *Jerom*. A certain Biſhop, ſays he, had a Mind to introduce, into his Church, the Reading of *Jerom*'s *Latin* Verſion of the Old Teſtament, inſtead of that formerly uſed therein: But the People finding, in the Prophecy of *Jonah*, a new Word *Hædera*, inſtead of *Cucurbita*, to which they and their Forefathers had been for ſome Ages accuſtomed, made ſo great an Outcry

and Diſturbance, that they were upon the Point of leaving their Biſhop, on Account of the Alteration: Nor had he any other Means to keep his Flock from Deſertion, but by replacing the old Word *Cucurbita*, and eraſing *Hædera*. Now, the Uſe I would make of this Story in the preſent Argument ſhould be, to make you ſenſible of the Difficulty, or rather Impoſſibility of making any Changes of Moment in the Goſpels and Acts of the Apoſtles. For if the ancient Chriſtians were ſo tenacious of their old *Latin* Verſion, as to raiſe a Tumult upon the Change of but one ſingle Word, which made no material Difference in the Senſe of a Prophet; how tragical, how clamorous, how out of all Patience would an old Chriſtian Audience have been, upon hearing Facts added in the Hiſtories of the New Teſtament, or Paſſages omitted, to the Recital of which they and their Fathers had been accuſtomed their whole Lives before. Beſides, how improbable, if not impoſſible, it is, that an Attempt to deprave the Goſpels and other received Books of the New Teſtament, ſhould ſuc-

ceed, muſt appear to every one, who conſiders how widely diſperſed the Copies of thoſe Books were, both in their original Languages, and in the Verſions early made from them for the Uſe of ſuch Churches as were Strangers to the *Greek* Tongue. He therefore that would to purpoſe have corrupted the holy Books, muſt have done it at once all the World over, and have perſuaded the Biſhops and Clergy of the Church to have ſurrendered their Bibles to be altered, as the Deſigns of Hereticks, or the Malice of unbelieving Men, ſhould require. He muſt, moreover, have prevailed with private Chriſtians, to have given up their Copies of Scripture for the ſame wicked Purpoſe. And thoſe very Men, who often, in Time of Perſecution, refuſed to ſurrender their Bibles to be burnt, at the Expence of their own Lives, muſt be ſuppoſed eaſily to have conſented to a ſtill greater Miſchief and Diſhonour of the Chriſtian Religion. For, better had it been for the Church of God entirely to have loſt her written Rule of Faith and Manners, than to have ſubmitted to a falſe

and

and fallacious one. But neither are theſe all the Difficulties, which would have lain in the Way of any one, that ſhould early have attempted the depraving of the Church's Goſpels. For beſides what has been already mentioned, he muſt have gone to work with the Creeds, that were received and agreed to throughout the Chriſtian World: For they contain a Summary of our Lord's Hiſtory, and, without undergoing ſome material Alterations, would have been perpetual and ſtanding Evidences againſt depraved Goſpels. The ſame may be ſaid of the ancient Liturgies; in which doubtleſs, as well as in our own, were inſerted, or at leaſt alluded to, many Sayings and Actions of our bleſſed Saviour: All which muſt have been new formed, to make them correſpond with the corrupted Records of Chriſtianity. A ſuitable Change alſo muſt have been made in the Feſtivals of the Church, inſtituted as Memorials of the great Events mentioned in the genuine Goſpels, which muſt have been put down, and others appointed, that would be more agreeable to the new fangled Memoirs of

the Life and Doctrines of our bleſſed Saviour.

Laſtly, to mention no more, the Writings of the Apoſtolical and other early Fathers, diſperſed throughout the Chriſtian World, muſt have been called in, and made conformable to the new modelled Goſpels, in Doctrines, in hiſtorical Facts, and literal Citations from thoſe holy Books: And if this was not practicable, as it hardly was, they muſt have been utterly ſuppreſſed; that ſo no Remains might be left of the Goſpels and other hiſtorical Books in their firſt Purity. And he who can believe, that all theſe Difficulties could poſſibly be got over by any Man, or by any Set of Men, muſt have it entirely in his Power to believe whatever he wiſhes to be true, tho' ever ſo ridiculous and impracticable.

But, *Secondly*, Beſides the ſeeming Impoſſibility of ſuch a Depravation in the Nature and Reaſon of the Thing, we have ſuch unqueſtionable Evidences, and Monuments

numents of the Gospels having been faithfully conveyed down to us, as no other History ever had. For what extant profane History is there, of any Antiquity, from which any competent Portions have been cited by the Writers of every Age, since those Histories were published, from which it may appear, upon comparing them, that the Copies we now have, in the Main, are pure and uncorrupted? Whereas, in every Century, since the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles appeared in the World, many Ecclesiastical Writers have cited largely from them, and for the greater Part conformably to each other, and to the Copies we now possess. Besides occasional Citations, in most of the intervening Ages, some, or all the Gospels, have been explained and commented upon, and the entire Text has been recited, as is usually done by Scholiasts and Expositors. Add to all this the ancient Versions of the Gospels and Acts yet extant, as the *Syriack*, probably composed in the second Century, and *Jerom*'s vulgar *Latin* in the fourth, besides others of a later Date; all which,

excepting ſome inconſiderable Variations, perfectly agree together.

Upon the Whole, therefore, the ſacred Hiſtories of the New Teſtament have incomparably more and ſtronger Vouchers for their Integrity, than any profane Books of equal Antiquity whatever: So that, either the Uncorruptneſs of the former muſt be allowed us, or the latter muſt be entirely given up, as unworthy of the leaſt Credit. For few profane Hiſtorians have been cited by Writers of the intermediate Ages, fewer ſtill have been tranſlated, and none, that I know of, have been commented upon.

I ſhall add only one Argument more for the Incorruptneſs of the New Teſtament Scriptures, eſpecially of the Hiſtorical Parts of them, which, tho' a negative one, is to me very convincing; and that is, the Silence of Hereticks and Apoſtates as to any Falſification of thoſe Books. Frauds of this Kind might probably have been kept ſecret, if Chriſtians had been all along unanimous

nanimous in other Reſpects; and if no conſiderable Men had at any Time revolted from them to the *Pagan* Superſtition. But this was by no Means the Caſe of *Chriſtendom* in the early Ages: It was ſplit by Schiſms and various Hereſies, the Heads whereof would have been glad of any Handle for vilifying the Orthodox Church, with ſo black a Charge, as that of corrupting and altering the original Records of Chriſtianity, and who thereby might have ſcreened their own Errors from the Imputation of being unſcriptural. And yet among the ſoberer and more rational Hereticks, we hear not ſo much as a Suſpicion of any ſuch Thing as Scriptures falſified: But Hereticks, as well as *Catholicks*, appeal to the ſame Goſpels, *&c.* as authentick and unqueſtionable. And as the Church was early exerciſed by the Hoſtilities of Heretical Adverſaries, ſo was it ſometimes vexed and haraſſed by Apoſtates: But neither did any of theſe pretend to tax the Chriſtian Church, after they had deſerted her, with altering the written Charter of her

her Religion. Particularly *Julian* the Emperor, who, whilſt in Pretence a Chriſtian, had probably ſeen Copies of the Goſpels and Acts, as old as the Apoſtolical Age itſelf, had yet obſerved no Variations between *them*, and thoſe current in his own Time. For he complains of none in his Writings, after he became an Apoſtate, and a moſt bitter Enemy to the Chriſtian Name, as he certainly would have done, if Cauſe had been given for it.

But againſt all this it is objected by the Adverſaries to the Goſpel, that the ancient Copies, Verſions, Commentaries and Citations, made from thence by ancient Fathers, to which we appeal for the Integrity and Uniformity of the New Teſtament Hiſtory in all Ages, prove the direct contrary. For, from all theſe, ſay they, learned and zealous Chriſtians have collected no leſs than thirty Thouſand various Readings; which ſhews, that ſince the Text of thoſe Books is ſo precarious, no Proof can be built thereon for the Truth and divine Authority of the Chriſtian Religion.

To

To which I ſhall reply, firſt, in Reſpect to the Number of the various Readings ſo much complained of; and,

Secondly, With Regard to the Importance of thoſe Readings.

Firſt, The great Number of the various Readings in the Goſpels, and Acts of the Apoſtles, is what we freely confeſs: But then we ſay, that this is not peculiar to the Books of the New Teſtament, but is common to all Writings of equal Antiquity. The firſt Tranſcribers of Books uſually made Slips of this Kind, and their Succeſſors continued and added to the Miſtakes: So that the Objection from various Readings in general, affects all ancient Books alike: And if they, nevertheleſs, are conceived not to affect the faithful Conveyance of profane Books, neither ought they to be urged againſt that of ſacred ones. If they ſay further, that no profane Book, of equal Size and Antiquity with the New Teſtament, has ſo many various

rious Readings as are collected in a late celebrated Edition, which yet is denied, by a very learned and every Way competent Judge of such Matters, the Reason of the Difference is evident, *viz.* that no one Book of the same Age has been near so often transcribed, translated, commented on, and cited from, as the New Testament hath been. From which Circumstances an uncommon Number of various Readings must arise, without a Miracle to prevent it. So that if the Transcribers of sacred and Ecclesiastical Books, had not been more accurate than the Copists of ancient *Greek* and *Latin* Writers, the Disproportion between the various Readings of each must probably have been much greater, than it now is. Besides, they who complain of the excessive Number of various Readings in the New Testament, as rendering the Text precarious, betray either great Ignorance, or Malice: For a very learned Person, if Infidels had Room for Conviction, has evinced, that by how much the greater the Number of various Readings on any old Book are, by so much a better

better and more exact Text may be compiled from them: So that, if inſtead of thirty Thouſand various Readings in the New Teſtament, Criticks could have ſupplied us with ſixty Thouſand, the ſacred Text thereof might have been rendered more perfect, than it now is. So that the comparative ſmall Number of various Readings in ancient ſecular Writings, is a Diſadvantage, rather than a Happineſs to them. Here, therefore, the Artillery of our Enemies turns upon themſelves, and their very Objections prove what they were intended to gainſay, *viz.* the Integrity and Purity of the ſacred Text of the New Teſtament. But, *Secondly*, Suppoſing the Number of various Readings in the New Teſtament, *cæteris paribus*, to exceed that of other ancient Hiſtories, and that ſuch various Readings might poſſibly have affected the Credit of the four Goſpels and Acts of the Apoſtles; yet, unleſs it has really and actually done them this Miſchief, the Number of them is no Objection at all to the faithful Conveyance of thoſe Books. And upon the exacteſt Inquiry we find, that we may

ſafely

ſafely leave it to the Enemies of Revelation, to make their utmoſt Advantage of all the Varieties that can be collected from Manuſcripts, Verſions, Commentaries, and Citations. They have often been defied to make up a Text out of all theſe, that will alter the Chriſtian Syſtem in any one important Particular whatever. They have been told, that when this has been done, every Article of Faith, and every Rule of good Living, will be found in their new compacted Text, which appears at preſent in our current ones. And which is more to the preſent Purpoſe, we may defy them, by the Uſe of ſuch Means, to deprive us of any one Evidence for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, from Miracles performed, or Propheſies fulfilled. They will not be able to ſtrike out one of either Sort from the Number of them, as they ſtand at preſent. To what Purpoſe then is it, to charge the Hiſtory of the New Teſtament with Defects of ſo little Importance, as do not affect either its Uſefulneſs, or its Veracity. We own, that the *Greek* Teſtament has ſuffered by Length of Time, as well

well as other old Books; but the good Providence of God over the ſacred Contents of it, has therein remarkably appeared, that neither the Fraud of Heretical Tranſcribers, nor the Careleſſneſs and human Inadvertency of *Catholick* ones, have produced various Readings, that affect Chriſtianity in its Fundamentals of Doctrine and Practice, or that weaken the great Evidences of Truth and Divinity therein contained.

And thus I have ſhewn, that the Hiſtorical Books of the New Teſtament, wherein the Facts of Miracles and Prophecies fulfilled are ſet down, deſerve to be credited on the Strength of thoſe very Maxims, which induce all reaſonable Men to believe other ancient Narratives, *viz.* that they were unqueſtionably committed to Writing at firſt, by Hands that were capable and willing to ſpeak the Truth, and that their Writings have been, in the Main, faithfully conveyed down to the preſent Times.

But

But before I conclude, permit me to recapitulate, and preſent you, at once, with what I have been doing for ſome Years in the Courſe of theſe Lectures.

The great Point laboured throughout, has been to ſtate and defend the two grand Evidences of Chriſtianity, Miracles and Prophecies fulfilled.

As to the former of theſe, the Evidence of Miracles, two Difficulties have generally attended the Uſe of it.

Firſt, How to make a right and good Definition of them; and,

Secondly, To bring the Evidence from them within a moderate Compaſs: Becauſe it has been thought by ſome neceſſary, firſt to prove a Revelation good and right in its Internals, before we can uſe the Argument from Miracles in its Favour.

I therefore propoſed a Method in treating of Miracles, by which both theſe Incumbrances might be removed, and much both of Time and Perplexity be ſaved in the Uſe of this grand Evidence.

In order to which I affirmed, and, as I verily think, have proved, that Miracles, ſo circumſtanced as thoſe of the Goſpel are, do ſingly and directly prove the Revelation by them atteſted to come from God, to every one that owns his Being, and admits his eſſential Perfections, And thoſe Circumſtances are, *firſt*, that the Miracles ſo atteſting were ſingle, unrivalled, and unoppoſed by others, in Favour of a different Religion, pretending likewiſe to have come from God. Or, *Secondly*, In Caſe there was a Rivalſhip or Oppoſition, the Miracles done for the Goſpel were moſt in Number, and ſtrangeſt in Kind. I firſt ſhewed in general, that theſe Rules for diſtinguiſhing when Miracles prove a Revelation to be divine, were good and ſufficient in themſelves; and, ſecondly, That the Religions of *Moſes* and Chriſt were confirmed by Miracles,

racles exactly anſwerable to theſe Rules, Miracles that were either unoppoſed, or elſe ſuperior to all Oppoſition.

By conſidering the Goſpel Miracles in this Light, both the Ends propoſed were fully anſwered. For, firſt, hereby was precluded all Nicety about the Definition of a Miracle; it being ſufficient to our Purpoſe, that an Effect diſtinguiſhed by that Name, be ſuch a one as exceeds human Power and Art to bring about. Hereby alſo, ſecondly, we were relieved from the Toil of proving the Internals of the Goſpel to be ſound and worthy of God; about which, tho' an evident Point, Unbelievers may raiſe Cavils without End: For if the Miracles of the Goſpel, according to the Rules laid down, prove the Revelation therein contained to have come from God, the Internals of the Revelation muſt be good and worthy of its Author, any Appearances to the contrary notwithſtanding.

Having

Having ſhewn, that the Miracles of the Goſpel abſolutely and directly proved it to be a divine Revelation, to them who beheld thoſe Miracles, the next Step was to ſhew the Certainty of thoſe Facts, to all who have lived in the Ages following. In order to which, I ſhewed, that the Tradition or Conveyance of thoſe miraculous Facts, has been as regular and unqueſtionable, as the Nature of diſtant and paſt Events can poſſibly admit of. From whence I argued, that as it is inconſiſtent with the divine Perfections, and therefore impoſſible, that God ſhould do, or ſuffer to be done, unoppoſed or ſuperior Miracles, in Behalf of any pretended Revelation, that really came not from him: So, for the ſame Reaſon, it is morally impoſſible, that he ſhould give Leave for a falſe Account of Miracles to deſcend to us, with all the Marks and Appearances of Truth, as he muſt have done, if the Goſpel Hiſtory be a Narrative of Facts which never happened. The Enemies of Revelation, knowing the Force of the Argument from

Miracles, have endeavoured to ſet it aſide two Ways: Firſt, by a Pretence that it is beſide the Queſtion: Jeſus and his Apoſtles having founded Chriſtianity on a different Bottom, to wit, Prophecies fulfilled. And, ſecondly, they pretend, that, as Miracles are not an original and eſſential Proof of Chriſtianity, ſo they are not a good ſubſidiary one: Becauſe, if the Scripture Argument from Prophecy be invalid, Miracles cannot alter its Nature, ſo as to make it a valid one. In anſwer to which, I have endeavoured to demonſtrate, that Jeſus and his Apoſtles have, at leaſt, laid as much Streſs on Miracles, as Proofs of the Goſpel Religion, as they have done on Prophecy: And that conſequently, Miracles are a pertinent and original Proof of Chriſtianity.

Secondly, That Prophecies cited in the New Teſtament, as fulfilled by Chriſt, are no invalid Foundation of Chriſtianity, and therefore need not the Aid of Miracles to make it good.

In

In the Profecution of this latter Point, I ran thro' moſt of the Prophecies made uſe of by the Writers of the New Teſtament, and ſhewed of each, as I went along, that there was nothing weak or abſurd in the Accommodation of it, by the ſacred Writers, to the Perſon and the Times of Jeſus Chriſt. This was all that the Method of our Adverſaries required to be ſaid, in Behalf of the Scripture Evidence from Prophecy; though I took Occaſion to ſhew frequently, that a great deal more might be ſaid for it, if Need were; and that the Completion of thoſe Prophecies, to the *Jews* eſpecially, for whoſe Uſe, and to whom they were principally applied, were irrefragable Proofs of Jeſus's being the Chriſt.

After I had done this, nothing further ſeemed neceſſary to the Vindication of the two grand Foundations of Chriſtianity, Miracles and Prophecy, but to defend the Canon of the Old Teſtament, in which the Prophecies were to be found, and likewiſe

the Hiſtorical Parts of the New, which contained the Events, by which ancient Predictions were fulfilled; and alſo the many and wonderful Miracles, by which God confirmed the Religion of his Son Jeſus, againſt the Cavils of Gainſayers.

And having done all this, I may now be at Liberty to pronounce, upon the Whole, that as ſure as God is holy, juſt, and good, as ſure as he is jealous of his own Honour, and an Enemy to religious Impoſture; ſo ſure is it, that the Goſpel of Chriſt came from Heaven, and is worthy to be believed and obeyed.

It has often been obſerved, that the Enemies to our holy Faith, though aſſuming the Name of Deiſts, do ſtill, on ſome Occaſion or other, drop that Mask, and ſhew, that it was only a Cover for the odious Face of Atheiſm. Not, perhaps, that theſe wretched Men were originally Atheiſts, but finding it impoſſible to maintain their Ground againſt divine Revelation, on the Foot of Deiſm, they are obliged, in the End,

End, to retreat to Atheiſm, as the grand Fort and Citadel of their Cauſe. Rather than admit the Title of Chriſt to rule over them, they are contented to renounce God: And thus they exactly verify the Saying of St. *John*, *Ep.* I. Chap. ii. ver. 23. *Whoſoever denieth the Son, the ſame hath not the Father.*

What remaineth therefore, my beloved Brethren, but that we, who are firm and perſuaded Chriſtians, do bleſs God for having built his Church on ſuch invincible Foundations, as neither the Gates of Hell, nor the Malice and Cunning of Atheiſtical Men, will ever be capable of undermining. The Chriſtian Religion is a Cauſe common to us all, and every one is bound to contribute to its Defence, by all Means, that are within his Reach. Would the moſt illiterate Believer then know, what Service is required of him in this ſpiritual Warfare; the Anſwer will be, let him live up to the Rules of Religion, and maintain the Doctrine of God, by adorning it. Let us all, then, be living Apo-

logiſts for our holy Faith, that, by the Light of our good Works, we may draw Unbelievers out of the Darkneſs and Shadow of Death, into the Sunſhine of God's glorious Goſpel.

EIGHT

EIGHT

SERMONS

PREACH'D at the

Cathedral Church of St. *PAUL*,
In the YEARS 1738 and 1739;

AT THE

LECTURE

Founded by the Honoured

Lady *MOYER*.

By *LEONARD TWELLS*, D. D.
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SERMON I.

REV. iii. 14.

And unto the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, write, These Things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness; the Beginning of the Creation of God.

THE learned Persons, who have, for near twenty Years, gone before me in this Lecture, (set up for the Defence of our blessed Lord's real and essential Divinity,) have considered that Argument under almost every Method conceivable: So as to leave but little Room for advancing any thing new and considerable on that Subject. If any thing remains of

of this Kind, it ſhould ſeem to be a particular Diſcuſſion of ſome Texts, on which the *Arians* build their Denial of the Son's Co-eternity and Co-equality with the Father in all eſſential Perfections. This therefore I purpoſe to do in the main of my future Diſcourſes, hoping to ſhew, that *Arianiſm*, which has been given out as the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, has no real Support from that great Rule of Faith, but is as unſcriptural as it is uncatholick.

I have choſen to begin with the Paſſage of my Text: Becauſe, if we attend only to the Sound of the Words, it is perhaps the ſtrongeſt Authority for the *Arian* Hypotheſis, that is to be met withall in the whole New Teſtament: For in the latter End of it, the Apocalyptick Writer, St. *John the Evangeliſt*, calls Chriſt Ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, which in our *Engliſh* Bible is rendered *the Beginning of the Creation of God.* If this be the neceſſary, or the probable Meaning of St. *John*'s Words, the plain and immediate Conſequence of the Paſſage would be this, that Chriſt is a Creature of

the Father's, tho' the firſt Work of his Hands; that he is a finite and precarious Being, altogether diſtinct from the Father, and therefore not one God with him, nor God at all in the proper Senſe of the Word: But called ſo in the Scripture by the ſame Figure, which accounts for Angels and Magiſtrates, and the falſe Objects of Worſhip amongſt the Heathens, being ſo named in Holy Writ.

For as Chriſt's human Nature had its Beginning ſome Thouſand Years after God's Creation: So that human Nature of his could not be ſpoken of in the Text, as the Beginning of the Creation of God, but his earlieſt and moſt excellent Principle; and conſequently the Son, in his higheſt Capacity and Condition of Being, is there ſtiled the Beginning of the Creation of God, or the firſt of God's Creatures.

Thoſe indeed who maintain the Pre-exiſtence of Chriſt's human Soul, could they ſatisfy the World of the Truth and Certainty of that Opinion, might enable us in

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ſome Sort, to avoid the Force of this Conſequence: For then we might ſay, that St. *John* might not call Chriſt, in his divine Nature, the Beginning of the Creation of God, but ſpake thus with Reſpect only of his human Soul, which, for aught we know, might be the firſt Thing which God called into Being.

But without denying or calling in Queſtion the Truth of this Opinion, concerning the Pre-exiſtence of Chriſt's human Soul, we may modeſtly ſay, that the Truth of it is not evident enough for us to build upon it the Solution of the preſent Difficulty. And ſure I am, we have no Occaſion for Recourſe to Hypotheſes, in order to give the Words of the Text a ſound Explication.

For the Word *Beginning*, which is what chiefly gives an *Arian* Turn to the diſputed Part of my Text, is by no Means the neceſſary rendering of ἀρχὴ in the *Greek*; which is a very equivocal Word, and may as well be rendered here the *Head* of the Creation

Creation of God, as the *Beginning*. And if we put this Interpretation upon it, which is full as warrantable as the other, it becomes utterly unſerviceable to the *Arian* Cauſe, or rather makes againſt it. For then it conveys to us a Notion of Chriſt, as the Ruler and Governor of God's entire Creation: A Title too ſublime to be applied to a Creature.

But not to inſiſt on any Advantage in the Behalf of our bleſſed Lord's Divinity, from a particular Senſe of a Word that is capable of various Acceptations, let us try if we cannot fix the Senſe of Ἀρχὴ in the Text, ſo as that it may appear certainly to denote ſome high Character and Dignity belonging to the Son of God, and not, as the *Arians* explain it, a Priority of Creation before all things elſe.

In order to this let it firſt be obſerved, that the Meſſages to the ſeven Churches of *Aſia*, contained in the ſecond and third Chapters of the *Revelations*, are directed in the Name of Chriſt, and conſtantly under

ſome Character or Epithet, which had been given of or to him, in the firſt Chapter of that Book. And becauſe a good deal depends on the Truth and Exactneſs of this Remark, I muſt beg your Patience and Attention, whilſt I prove this of each of thoſe Directions in particular.

The firſt of theſe is found to the Angel of the Church of *Epheſus*, *Rev.* ii. 1. and runs thus:

Theſe Things, ſaith He, that holdeth the ſeven Stars in his Right-hand, and *walketh in the midſt of the ſeven golden Candleſticks.* The former Part of this Deſcription is found in the 16th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter, where it is ſaid of the Son of Man, that appeared unto *John*, that *He had in his Right-hand ſeven Stars.* The latter Part occurs in the 12th and 13th Verſes of the ſame Chapter. *I ſaw*, ſays the Apocalyptick Writer, *ſeven Golden Candleſticks, and in the midſt of the ſeven Candleſticks, one like unto the Son of Man.*

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The ſecond Meſſage, that to the Church of *Smyrna*, *ver.* 8. of the ſecond Chapter, is ſent in the Name of him that is *the firſt and the laſt, which was dead and is alive*: Which are our Lord's own Sayings of himſelf in the firſt Chapter. For in the 11th *ver.* he ſays, *I am the firſt and the laſt.* And in the 18th *ver. I am he that liveth, and was dead.*

In the third Meſſage, that to the Church in *Pergamos*, *Chap.* ii. 12. we have the following Deſcription. *Theſe Things, ſaith he, which hath the ſharp Sword with two Edges.* This alſo is the very Characteriſtick of the Son of Man in the 16th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter, wherein it is ſaid, that *out of his Mouth went a ſharp two-edged Sword.*

The fourth Meſſage, unto the Angel of the Church at *Thyatira*, in the 18th *ver.* of the ſecond Chapter, proceeds in the Name of *the Son of God, who hath his Eyes like unto a Flame of Fire, and* whoſe *Feet are*

like fine Braſs. But this very Delineation of the ſame divine Perſon, we meet with in the 14th and 15th Verſes of the firſt Chapter. *His Eyes were like a Flame of Fire, and his Feet like unto fine Braſs.*

The fifth Meſſage, unto the Church in *Sardis*, in the firſt Verſe of the third Chapter, is uſhered in thus. *Theſe Things, ſaith he, that hath the ſeven Spirits of God, and the ſeven Stars.* Now, of the ſeven Spirits of God mention is made in the 4th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter, and of the ſeven Stars, as I have obſerved already in the 16th *ver.*

The ſixth Meſſage, that to the Church in *Philadelphia* is directed thus, in the 7th *ver.* of the third Chapter. *Theſe Things, ſaith he, that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the Key of David: He that openeth, and no Man ſhutteth; and ſhutteth, and no Man openeth.* All this Deſcription is implied in thoſe Words of the 18th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter; *And I have the Keys of Hell and Death:* For the ſaying immediately

diately preceding is, *I am he that liveth, and was dead*; *and behold I am alive for-evermore, i. e.* I am riſen again from the Dead to die no more. By thus returning from *Hades* and from Death, in Vertue of his own Power, Chriſt manifeſted, that he had the Keys of both thoſe Abodes. This is more fully expreſſed at the Head of the Meſſage to the Church in *Philadelphia*, where the Keys of Death and Hell are called *the Keys of David*; probably becauſe he ſo clearly foretold the illuſtrious Event of our Lord's Reſurrection, ſpeaking as in his own Perſon; which evinced, that he, of whom he ſpake, had the Keys of Hell and of Death. On the ſame Account alſo it ſhould ſeem the Epithet of he that is holy, was made Part of Chriſt's Character, *viz.* becauſe *David* foretold that God *would not ſuffer his Holy One to ſee Corruption.* As for what followeth, *He that openeth, and no Man ſhutteth, and ſhutteth, and no Man openeth*; it is only a farther Illuſtration of our Lord's having the Key of *David*, or the Keys of Hell and of Death.

The ſeventh and laſt Meſſage is introduced with the Words of my Text. *And unto the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, write, Theſe Things, ſaith the Amen, the faithful and true Witneſs, the Beginning of the Creation of God.*

Now the firſt of theſe Expreſſions, *the Amen*, is the ſame Senſe, in a different Language, with what follows of *faithful and true:* And Jeſus Chriſt is expreſly called *the faithful Witneſs*, in the 5th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter. And thus we come to the grand Queſtion, where the remaining Part of his Character, who ſent the ſeventh Meſſage, *viz. the Beginning of the Creation of God*, is to be found in the firſt Chapter of the *Revelations*. For as all the Deſcriptions of Chriſt, previous to the other ſix Meſſages, and to the former Part of the ſeventh, are found there, either in expreſs or in ſimilar Words, it is ſurely right to conclude, that the Words in Diſpute, *the Beginning of the Creation of God*, are in Senſe, tho' not in Sound, to be met with there alſo.

If

If then the *Arians* can ſhew us any thing in the firſt Chapter of the *Revelations* which countenances their Notion, that the *Logos* or Word, which afterwards became incarnate, was the firſt Creature that God made, they are wellcome to apply the Remark I have made, and to inſiſt upon ſuch a Paſſage as parallel to, and explanatory of the latter Part of my Text, wherein Jeſus Chriſt is ſaid to be *the Beginning of the Creation of God.* For tho' the *Greek* Word ἀρχὴ be equivocal, and by no means neceſſarily ſignifies the Beginning: Yet if any thing which imports that the *Logos* had a Beginning, was to be met with in the firſt Chapter, which we find to have been a Kind of Storehouſe of Images and Characters, under which Chriſt is repreſented in the ſecond and third Chapters, there would be good Reaſon to underſtand ἀρχὴ in the *ver.* of my Text, as properly rendered by the Beginning.

But if nothing in all that Chapter can be made to look the leaſt that Way, it will

be a ſtrong Preſumption againſt ſo rendering that Word; and ſome other Acceptation of the Word ἀρχὴ, muſt be ſought for.

Further ſtill, if the firſt Chapter of the *Revelation* does not only, not ſupply us with Authorities for Chriſt's being the firſt made of God's Creatures, but, on the other Hand, contains Teſtimonies of his having exiſted from all Eternity; then ἡ ἀρχὴ in my Text cannot poſſibly mean Beginning. Both becauſe it would deſtroy the Congruity of Character every where-elſe ſo exactly obſerved between the firſt Chapter, and the ſecond and third; and alſo becauſe that Suppoſition would make our Lord ſpeak contradictory Things of himſelf: It makes him ſet up for Eternity in the firſt Chapter of the *Revelation*, and own that he had a Beginning in the third: But Teſtimonies there are of the Son's Eternity in the firſt Chapter of that Book, above all Exception. I ſhall at preſent principally inſiſt on that, from the 11th *ver.* becauſe it is on all Hands allowed that

it

it belongs to the Son of Man. *I am*, says that divine Person, *Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.* Now the former of these Characters, *Alpha* and *Omega*, if we are to believe the *Arians*, is applied to the Father three Verses higher. And what is there meant by it? They themselves admit that it denotes his Eternity. If therefore *Alpha* and *Omega*, predicated of the Father by himself, in the 8th *ver.* denotes his Eternity, will not the same Expressions predicated of the Son by himself in the 11th *ver.* denote likewise his Eternity? Again, the Son says of himself in the 11th *ver.* that he is *the first and the last.* Just as God asserting his own Eternity, *Isaiah* xlvi. 6. says, *I am the first, and I am the last.*

Upon the whole then, whatever else is meant by Christ's being called Ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ in my Text, we have all imaginable Reason to affirm, that this Predicate does not denote what the *Arians* gather from thence, *viz.* that Christ, in his superior Nature, had a Beginning, being the first Handywork of God.

We ſhall perhaps be aſked, if the obvious Meaning of theſe Words is to be ſet aſide, what other Senſe we have to offer in its Stead. To which we might Reply, that we are not obliged to aſſign any. It is ſufficient for my preſent Purpoſe, if I have diſarmed the Enemies to our Lord's real Divinity of a Teſtimony, to which they often refer, when they mean to derogate from his Perfections of Conſubſtantiality, and Co-eternity with his Father. Having therefore no farther Service for my Text, than what is already performed, I might leave the farther Diſcuſſion of it, to thoſe whom it more immediately concerns. But I ſhall wave this Right at preſent, as for many other Reaſons, ſo more eſpecially for this; that, as I ſhewed from what Parts of the firſt Chapter of the *Revelations*, the Titles of our Lord, introductory to his Meſſages to ſix of the *Aſiatick* Churches, were taken, I may do the ſame by that to the ſeventh, the Church of *Laodicea*, in the Verſe of my Text. *Theſe Things ſaith the Amen, the faithful and true Witneſs,*

neſs, the Beginning of the Creation of God.

Theſe Characters then, or Predicates, are to be found, tho' not all of them, under the ſame Expreſſions in the former Part of the 5th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter, as follows. *And from Jeſus Chriſt, who is the faithful Witneſs, and the firſt-begotten of the Dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth.* In accommodating the firſt Words of each Paſſage there will be no Difficulty. *Amen, the Faithful and true Witneſs*, being neither more nor leſs, than ſaying of Chriſt, as St. *John* does in the 5th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter, that *he is the faithful Witneſs.* But the main Quære is, where we ſhall find any Thing in that Verſe which correſponds with the latter Words of my Text, in which our Lord is called Ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, and according to our Bible Tranſlation, *the Beginning of the Creation of God.* The *Greek* is ſtrong and emphatical, every Word having an Article, the uſual Note of Eminence, prefixed to it. For which Reaſon, was there

no

no other, we might conclude, that our *Engliſh* Tranſlation in this Place is too low and too general. The Words in the 5th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter, to which St. *John*, in the latter Part of my Text, moſt probably has reſpect, are theſe: *The firſt-begotten of the Dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth.* As to the former of theſe Expreſſions we meet with it but once elſewhere in the whole New Teſtament, *viz.* 1 *Col.* xviii. and there it is accompanied with clearer but equipollent Titles of Chriſt, all deſcribing him as the Head and Governor of his Church. *And he is*, ſays the Apoſtle, *the Head of the Body, the Church: Who is the Beginning, the firſt-begotten of the Dead, that in all Things he might have the Pre-eminence. Firſt-begotten* here ſignifies a Ruler in general, not one that becomes ſo by Primogeniture: So that *firſt-begotten of the Dead*, both here and in the firſt Chapter of the *Revelations*, denotes a Governor of ſuch as, in ſome particular Senſe, were dead; and what Senſe that was, no one will doubt, who remembers that St. *Paul* reckons all Chriſ-

tians to be dead in their Sins, till they were quickened by Chriſt. *Firſt-begotten*, then, *of the Dead*, is the ſame Title with *the Head of his Body the Church*, only differently expreſſed. And it would be no Strain of Language, or Propriety, to underſtand, in the very ſame Senſe, St. *John*'s Words in the latter Part of my Text, Ἡ ἀρχὴ ἡ κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, the Head or Chief of God's Spiritual Creation. Very agreeably hereto St. *Paul* calls a good Chriſtian καινὴ κτίσις, a new Creation, and makes it the great Diſtinction of Chriſtianity at large, that it is a new Creation; and the ſerious Profeſſion of the Goſpel is, by the ſame Apoſtle, called *putting on the new Man, who is created of God.* This ſpiritual Creation of God is truly greater and more glorious than his material Creation, and deſerved the emphatical Diſtinction it meets with in the Text. It was truly ἡ κτίσις, the great, the eminent Creation of God. And to be the Moderator and Governor of ſo wonderful a Work was the Title becoming the divine Perſon, of whom it is predicated in my Text. Thus I have ſhewn

that

that ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, *the Head of the Creation of God*, as it ſhould be rendered, is the ſame as *the firſt-begotten of the Dead*, in the 5th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter, and that they both denote Chriſt to be the Head of the Church.

It follows in the ſame Verſe, and ſpoken of the ſame Perſon, *and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth.* That Chriſt, as God, is really ſo, needs no Proof. But that here alſo is ſignified Chriſt's Supremacy over his Church, tho' at firſt it ſeems very unlikely, may be made appear not improbable.

In order then to that, let it be obſerved, that the Church of Chriſt ſometimes ſtands for the whole aggregate Body of the Faithful, united to Chriſt their Head, and that, at other Times, it ſtands for the Governors of that ſpiritual Society, deriving their Power from, and exerciſing it under the Direction of Chriſt, the Sovereign thereof. And in the later of theſe Senſes, I take it that Chriſt's Supremacy over his Church is

ſpoken

ſpoken of, when he is ſtiled *the Prince of the Kings of the Earth.* But to this there is a moſt obvious Objection, that to make *Kings of the Earth* ſtand for Church Governors, is direct Impropriety. But then it ſhould be remembered, that the Language of Viſions is not to be judged of like that of other Writings: That bold Figures and Expreſſions, ſtrained beyond their uſual Import, are no uncommon Things in the Writer before us: Laſtly, that this Interpretation, harſh as it appears, may be juſtified from St. *John* himſelf in this very Book. In the very next, *ver.* the 6th, he calls Chriſtians in general Kings, ſaying, He, *i. e. Chriſt hath made us Kings.* And in the fifth Chapter of the *Revelations*, *ver.* 10. he repreſents the four Beaſts and twenty Elders, by whom both *Grotius* and *Hammond* underſtand the Governors of the Church; he makes theſe to ſay of the Lamb: Thou *haſt made us unto our God, Kings and Prieſts; and we ſhall reign on the Earth.* Let therefore the Apocalyptick Writer explain himſelf, and we ſee that *the Prince of the Kings of the Earth,* is in

his Stile the ſame as Head and Governor of the Chriſtian Hierarchy.

The only thing remaining, is to make this Senſe of our Lord's Title of *Prince of the Kings of the Earth*, to coincide with what is ſaid of him in my Text, that he is Ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆ κτίσεως τῆ Θεῆ.

Now we have an undoubted Authority for ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσις, ſignifying ſecular Power in Scripture. St. *Peter* ſays, firſt Epiſtle, *Chap.* ii. *ver.* 13. *Submit yourſelves* πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει, *to every worldly Magiſtrate.* What follows plainly ſhews this to be the right rendering: For he adds, *Whether it be unto the King as Supreme, or to Governors, as to thoſe that are appointed by him.* If then ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσις ſtands in Scripture for ſecular Governors, what can be more natural than to explain κτίσις Θεῆ in my Text of Spiritual, *i. e.* Eccleſiaſtical Governors.

Upon the whole then we find by a thorough Conſideration of my Text, that the

the Senſe of it to be looked for in the 5th *ver.* of the firſt Chapter; that it is utterly unſerviceable to *Arian* Purpoſes, becauſe St. *John* ſpeaks not at all therein of what Chriſt our Lord is originally, and by Nature, but of what he is by Prerogative of Office and Oeconomy, the Head of his Church, the Fountain of all Graces and Bleſſings to his People in general, and of every ſpiritual Power in particular: Giving ſome Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and ſome Paſtors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Miniſtery, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt.

SERMON II.

JOHN i. 14.

And the Word was made Fleſh, and dwelt among us.

THERE is not a Point in the whole *Arian* Controverſy, more neceſſary to be determined, than the Meaning of the Word Fleſh in my Text. For if, as the *Arians* and *Apollinarians* maintain, St. *John* thereby affirms, that the Word took a human Body only, without a rational human Soul; then Chriſt had but one Nature, and conſequently, whatever is ſaid of him in Scripture, though ever ſo low, muſt be underſtood of him in his higheſt Capacity. At this Rate, he could not be truly and eſſentially God: Becauſe

God, in the ſtrict Senſe of the Word, cannot be born, nor dye, nor exert human Paſſions, nor be ſubject to human Infirmities. He cannot increaſe in Wiſdom and Knowledge, nor in Favour with the other divine Perſons in the Godhead; all which Things are predicated of Jeſus in the New Teſtament. But if, on the other Hand, our Evangeliſt, by the *Word*'s being made Fleſh, meant what the Church of God has all along underſtood to be his Meaning, that the Word was united to an entire human Nature, conſiſting of Body and Soul; then all theſe Objections to his real Divinity vaniſh at once: The low Things ſaid of Chriſt in Scripture, are obviouſly applied to that human Nature which he aſſumed, when he became incarnate; and the ſublime Names and Characters given him by the ſacred Writers, have alſo a proper Subject to which they belong, *viz.* the *Word*, of whom the Evangeliſt in the firſt Verſe of his Goſpel ſays, *that he was God.* By this Diſtinction of the two Natures in the Perſon of Chriſt, the New Teſtament is made conſiſtent with itſelf, which

which is utterly impracticable upon the *Arian*, or indeed on any other Hypotheſis. Thoſe who deny the human Nature of Chriſt, take great Advantage from the Text, in which they obſerve it is ſaid that *the Word was made*, not Man, but *Fleſh*, i. e. ſay they, obviouſly, a human Body: So that in Chriſt there was but one Nature, made up of a human Body, and the *Word* united to it and actuating it, inſtead of a human Soul. And truly, if the Word Fleſh, in Scripture, was never put for the entire man, but conſtantly ſignified his Body only, this Obſervation would have great Strength and Force. But, upon Enquiry we find, that by Fleſh in holy Writ, is frequently meant human Nature, or Man, in both his Integrals of Soul and Body. Thus *Gen.* vi. 12. it is ſaid, *that all Fleſh had corrupted his Way upon Earth*, i. e. All Men had. So alſo *Pſal.* lvi. 4. *I will not fear*, ſays holy *David*, *what Fleſh can do unto me*, i. e. I will not fear what Man can do unto me. For ſo he expreſsly ſays in Verſe 11. of the ſame Pſalm. Again, *Jeremy* vii. 5. *The Prophet declares him*

curſed, that truſteth in Man and maketh Fleſh his Arm: Where Fleſh has plainly the ſame Extent of Meaning with Man. St. *Matthew* alſo uſes Fleſh to the like Purpoſe; *Matt.* xxiv. 23. where he introduces our Lord ſaying, *Except thoſe Days ſhould be ſhortened, there ſhould no Fleſh be ſaved.* And ſo does St. *Paul*, *Rom.* iii. 20. when he aſſures us, *that by the Deeds of the Law, there ſhall no Fleſh be juſtified in the Sight of God.* So in the Text, where St. *John* tells us, *That the Word was made Fleſh*; his Meaning might be, that it was made or united to a compleat human Nature, conſiſting of Soul and Body. If, therefore, it can be made out, that this is the certain Senſe of Scripture in other Places, this poſſible Meaning of the Evangeliſt in the Text muſt be looked on as the actual one. The firſt Paſſage I ſhall produce for this Purpoſe, is *Heb.* ii. 17. where the Apoſtle aſſures us, *That it behoved our Lord, in all Things, to be made like unto his Brethren*, i. e. to other Men. An Aſſertion every Way conſiſtent with the Catholick Doctrine of the Incarnation, which teaches

teaches that Chriſt, as Man, was in all natural Reſpects what other Men are, a Compound of Soul and Body, and, like them, ſubject to all innocent Infirmities, [by which he might be qualified to be a merciful and faithful High Prieſt.] But would the Apoſtle have ſaid all this, if the *Arian* Hypotheſis, concerning the Incarnation, had been true? For according to that, Chriſt was unlike his Brethren in the very principal Thing of all, having no human Soul, but, inſtead thereof, a Principle, which the *Arians* themſelves account to be prior in Time, and incomparably ſuperior in Nature, not only to the Mind of Man, but to Angels and Archangels; a Principle, which at firſt created, and at preſent ſuſtains all Things. *Laſtly*, a Principle, not to be wrought upon by Temptations from the World, the Fleſh, or the Devil; and conſequently, ſuch as could have no Feeling of our Infirmities in the Way of Sympathy. Goodneſs of Nature might incline him to be a merciful and faithful High Prieſt, but not Similitude of Condition; which yet is the Topick from which the

Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* argues in the Caſe before us.

A ſecond Argument from Scripture for the perfect Manhood of Chriſt, may be formed from the 2d Chapter of St. *Luke*, and the 57th Verſe. There the Evangeliſt giving an Account of our Lord, after his Return ſtom *Jeruſalem*, in the twelfth Year of his Age, ſaith, *that Jeſus increaſed in Wiſdom and Knowledge, and in Favour with God and Man.* All which is eaſy and intelligible, according to the Church's Account of the Incarnation. For the human Nature of Chriſt, conſiſting of Body and Soul, muſt have received Improvements, as others of the ſame Species do, from ripening Age and gradual Experience. But I am utterly at a Loſs to conceive, how the *Arians* ſhould be able to reconcile the Remark of the Evangeliſt, with their Scheme of the Incarnation: For the *Word*, which, according to them, was the only intelligent Principle in the Perſon of Jeſus, that *Word*, I ſay, when he became incarnate, they ſuppoſe to have had the utmoſt

utmoſt Perfection in Wiſdom and Knowledge, that any Creature was capable of receiving or attaining to. Could he therefore, when vailed in the Fleſh, poſſibly increaſe in Wiſdom and Knowledge? It muſt ſurely be the moſt flagrant of all Abſurdities to imagine, that the *Word*, by whom all Things were at firſt made, and who gave us all thoſe Faculties, whereby we acquire Wiſdom and Knowledge, could be himſelf ignorant of any Thing that comes into the human Mind, in the Ways of Senſation and Reflection. And yet, without ſuppoſing Ignorance of this Kind in ſome Degree, there can be no poſſible Room for an Increaſe of Wiſdom and Knowledge in Chriſt. Had, indeed, St. *Luke* ſaid this of our Lord more early in his Infancy, at that Age, when Children firſt become capable of ſpeaking their Sentiments, it might have been imagined the Evangeliſt meant no more thereby, than that the Wiſdom of Jeſus, which, for Want of Speech, could not before diſplay itſelf, then firſt began to appear in his Words and Actions. But as the Æra of this Re-

mark is the 12th Year of our Lord's Age, long before which all bodily Impediments to the Diſplay of intellectual Abilities are fully removed, St. *Luke* cannot reaſonably be underſtood otherwiſe, than of an actual and diſcernible Improvement in the Underſtanding of the bleſſed Child, whoſe Body therefore muſt have been actuated by a human Mind that was capable of ſuch Improvement, and not, as the *Arians* ſay, by the *Logos*, or *Word*, in whom, long before this, were hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge.

A third Reaſon why the Church affirms our Lord, in one of his Natures, to have been a perfect Man, made up of a reaſonable Soul and human Fleſh, is, that the Scriptures aſſure us, that the Power whereby he wrought Miracles, was conferred upon him at his Baptiſm; which neceſſarily ſuppoſes, that before this he had no ſuch wonderful Gift. Now the Subject in which this Power reſided, muſt have been the Mind of Jeſus: And we find no Difficulty in apprehending, how a human Sould ſhould be incapable

ble of performing miraculous Operations, till God ſhould veſt ſuch a Power in it; and therefore think it highly reaſonable to believe, that Chriſt, together with the Fleſh, aſſumed ſuch a Soul, and in this entire human Nature was anointed by God, after his Baptiſm, with Power and the Holy Ghoſt. But when we conſider this Matter in the *Arian* View of the Incarnation, we find the higheſt Perplexity, or rather Abſurdity, therein. For, according to their Scheme, it was needful for God to confer the Power of working Miracles on the *Word*, whom they make to be the only rational Principle in the Perſon of Chriſt. But at this Rate, what was become of that ſupereminent Power, by which this divine *Word* at the Beginning made all Things? He whom the Scriptures repreſents as God and the Author of Nature, could he poſſibly need additional Powers for breaking in upon the Courſe of Nature by miraculous Interpoſitions? To ſuch Abſurdities are Men reduced, who are reſolved, at all Events, to defend Hypotheſes in Religion, that have no Foundation in Holy Writ.

A fourth Proof of the Catholick Faith concerning the Incarnation of Chriſt, is drawn from the human Paſſions and Infirmities aſcribed to him; which make it neceſſary to believe that he had a real and entire human Nature, which, without Reproach or any Inconſiſtency, might be the Subject of ſuch Paſſions and innocent Infirmities. The moſt remarkable of theſe was the Fear of Death, which appeared in our Lord to an uncommon Degree. Immediately before his Apprehenſion, *My Soul*, ſays he to his Diſciples, *is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto Death.* St. *Luke* relates, that *he was in an Agony, and prayed more earneſtly, and that his Sweat was, as it were, great Drops of Blood falling down to the Ground.* In this there was no Sin; but ſurely there was, in this Behaviour of our Lord, Infirmity enough to argue that he was perfect Man. And perhaps one End of the bleſſed Spirit in dictating to the ſacred Penmen the Hiſtory of our Saour's Fears, ſo fully and ſo particularly, was to aſcertain our Faith in this great Article

ticle of revealed Religion, that Chriſt, as Man, was in all Things as we are, Sin only excepted. But would it have been thus, if, inſtead of a human Soul, the Body of our Lord had been animated by the *Word?* Can it be conceived, that ſo exalted a Being, however incloſed or impriſoned in a human Body, would not more ſtrongly have ſupported itſelf under the Proſpect of Suffering and Death? Whatever Influence a particular Complexion of Body may have upon a human Soul, common Senſe forbids us to think it would have the like Effect upon a Being, whom the *Arians* themſelves allow to have had all the Perfection of Wiſdom and Power, that God can poſſibly communicate.

Thus I have ſhewn, that the *Word* which took Fleſh, muſt, together with a human Body, have taken alſo a human Soul, that is, an entire and perfect Manhood; and that the Scriptures make ſuch a Suppoſition neceſſary.

And

And in this Opinion we are the more confirmed, by obſerving, that the early Fathers made the ſame Concluſion from theſe Scriptures, unanimouſly affirming, that Chriſt had two diſtinct Natures, and that his inferior one conſiſted of a human Soul, as well as a human Body, always diſtinguiſhing between the *Word* and the Manhood, to which it was united at the Incarnation. I ſhall begin with *Clemens Romanus*, a Writer Contemporary with the Apoſtles, and mentioned by St. *Paul* with the honourable Teſtimony that his Name is in the Book of Life: His Words are theſe, *Chriſt our Lord, for the Love he bare towards us, by the Will of God, gave his Fleſh for our Fleſh, and his Soul for our Souls.*

Of this Number alſo may be reckoned *Ignatius*, a Companion of the Apoſtles, who, in his Epiſtle to the Church of *Smyrna*, calls Chriſt a perfect Man; which he never could have done, had not he believed, that, together with a human Body, he had likewiſe a human Soul.

After

After him, *Juſtin Martyr*, in the ſame Age, in his firſt Apology, ſpeaking of what Chriſt was after his Incarnation, beſides his being the *Word*, makes him alſo to conſiſt of a Body and Soul.

Irenæus, a moſt eminent Writer in the ſecond Century, ſays of Chriſt, that in himſelf he united Man with God; and that by Man he did not mean the human Body, or Fleſh only, is plain from his Definition of Man on another Occaſion, *viz.* that he is a Compound or Mixture of Soul and Fleſh.

Tertullian, in the End of the ſame Century, in his Book againſt *Praxeas* ſays of the *Word*, that at the Incarnation he intended to aſſume the very Subſtances of Man, the Fleſh and the Soul.

The learned *Origen*, about the Middle of the third Century, in very many Places of his Book againſt *Celſus* ſtrongly aſſerts, that Chriſt had a human Soul, and exactly diſtinguiſhes between the human and the divine

divine Nature in the Perſon of Chriſt. One or two Inſtances from him may ſuffice. He calls him then God, who came in a human Soul and Body. Again, upon *Celſus*'s objecting againſt the Chriſtian Doctrine of Chriſt's coming down upon Earth, in order to his Incarnation, that it was impoſſible God ſhould undergo ſo great a Change as that Suppoſition implied, *Origen* admits the Change objected, to mean Chriſt's taking upon him a mortal Body, and a human Soul; he admits the Fact, and in Anſwer to it, deſires *Celſus* to obſerve, that the *Word*, after the Incarnation, ſtill continued a diſtinct Nature or Subſtance as before, and that it ſuffered none of thoſe Things which his Body and Soul, *i. e.* his human Nature ſuffered. [*Origen*'s Teſtimony is the more valuable, becauſe he delivers the known Doctrine of the Church in this Point; and becauſe he was a Perſon of great Acuteneſs, as well as Eminence, for Biblical Learning. And it may be juſtly hoped, that his Opinion will have its due Weight with the *Arians* our Adverſaries, who, on many Occaſions, though

unjuſtly, boaſt of him, as concurring with them in the Denial of the real and eſſential Divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghoſt.]

I might have gone down lower among the Fathers for Teſtimonies, concerning the two Natures in the Perſon of Chriſt, and his taking a human Soul, as well as Body, at the Incarnation: But I choſe to confine my Inquiries within the three firſt Centuries; becauſe the Writers neareſt the Apoſtolical Times, are confeſſedly of greateſt Moment in witneſſing to the Primitive Doctrines; and alſo becauſe they wrote long before the Riſe of *Arianiſm*; and for that Reaſon ſtand free from all Suſpicion of having invented Diſtinctions to ſerve the Orthodox Cauſe againſt that Hereſy.

And now, upon the Whole, we are not to wonder, that the *Arians*, both ancient and modern, ſhould contend againſt the two diſtinct Natures in the Perſon of Chriſt, or make that to conſiſt only of the *Word* united to, and animating a human Body.

We

We ſee, that could they have carried this Point, they would never have been at a Loſs for ample Teſtimonies from Scripture, for the Son's being a Creature. For the many low Things ſaid of him, ſuch as are incompatible with all juſt Notions of the ſupreme Being, having then no other Subject to relate to beſides the *Word*, would have concluded againſt his real Divinity. And yet, it would have been as true as ever, that the Names, and Attributes, and Worſhip given to the Son, in common with the Father, were demonſtrative that he was likewiſe God in the true and proper Senſe of the Word. So that whatever Ground *Arianiſm* might gain, by the Diſproof of Chriſt's being a compound Perſon, the Event would prove fatal to Chriſtianity itſelf: Becauſe, on that Suppoſition, the Scriptures would be found to give clear Evidence for both Sides of a Contradiction, *viz.* that the *Logos*, or *Word*, was and was not a Creature, and conſequently muſt loſe all Authority, as a Rule of Faith to Mankind.

But

But God be thanked, the Church's Doctrine of Christ's two distinct and perfect Natures, which I hope I have shewn to be both Scriptural and Catholick, prevents every Mischief that the adverse Opinion would bring upon Orthodoxy, and its sacred Text, the Word of God: For thereby we are enabled to assign every Thing that is therein predicated of the Person of Christ to its proper and distinct Nature, the human Attributes to his assumed Manhood, and the sublime ones to his original Godhead. Thus *Arianism* is deprived of its main Support, and Scripture is found to bear uniform and consistent Testimony, to what the holy Church throughout the Work acknowledges, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is perfect God and perfect Man. To whom, *&c.*

SERMON III.

MARK xiii. 32.

But of that Day and that Hour knoweth no Man: No not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

SCARCE any one Text in the whole New Teſtament hath been ofter, or more ſtrenuouſly urged againſt the real and proper Divinity of Chriſt by the Enemies of that Doctrine, than that from St. *Mark* now read to you. Here we are told, whenever this Point is the Subject in Debate, that our Lord owns his own Knowledge to be limited, and that as to the Day and Hour of his Coming to Judgment, it was a Secret to Men, to Angels,

and even to himſelf, known to no one ſave the Father only. Since then, ſay the *Arians*, this is confeſſedly the Caſe; ſince it is a ruled Point in Scripture Theology, that the Son is not omniſcient, and natural Reaſon aſſures us, that whatever Being is truly God, muſt have that and every other infinite Perfection, it follows, that not the Son, but the Father only is originally and eſſentially God.

There would be much both of Strength and Pertinence in this Kind of Reaſoning, if the Son, ſaid in the Text not to have known the Day and Hour of his own Coming to Judgment, had not been a compound Perſon made up of two Natures, in one of which he might be ignorant of the Point in Queſtion, whilſt he was omniſcient, and conſequently God in the other: Or if, from any Circumſtance in the Text, the Confeſſion of Ignorance neceſſarily related to the Son in his higheſt Capacity and Condition of Being. But I hope to make it appear, that neither of theſe is the Caſe; the Conſequence of which will be, that the Paſſage

Paſſage of the Text is no juſt Authority againſt the real and proper Godhead of Chriſt.

Firſt, the Perſon of Chriſt conſiſted of two Natures, one of which being perfectly human, our Lord's Confeſſion of Ignorance in the Text might relate to that only, whilſt his other Nature might ſtill be omniſcient, and conſequently divine. The Truth of the Propoſition concerning the real and entire Manhood of Chriſt, was, I hope, fully eſtabliſhed in my laſt Diſcourſe on this Occaſion, and therefore need not be repeated. We may therefore conclude in general, that the Objection to our Lord's Divinity from his avowed Confeſſion of Ignorance, as to the Time of his laſt Coming to Judgment, will not affect his Title thereto, unleſs it likewiſe appears, from any Circumſtances in the Text itſelf, that this Confeſſion did neceſſarily relate to Chriſt in his higheſt Capacity and Condition of Being, not only as the Son of Man, but alſo as he was the only begotten Son of God, which is the ſecond and main Point which I am to guard againſt.

The *Arians*, not confiding altogether in their Denial of the two Natures in the Perſon of Chriſt, labour to ſhew, from internal Evidence in the Text itſelf, that Chriſt muſt have owned Ignorance in every of his Natures and Capacities.

And *Firſt*, They tell us, that had Chriſt in the Text ſpoken of his own Ignorance, as he was the Son of Man, or Man only, he would have ſaid, *But of that Day and that Hour knoweth no Man: No not the Son, neither the Angels which are in Heaven, but the Father.* For the Son of Man, as ſuch, being made a little lower than the Angels, muſt naturally know leſs than they do, and therefore, in the Scale of intelligent Beings, would be placed below them: Whereas, in the Order of the Text, the Son is mentioned as next in Knowledge to the Father, and above the Angels which are in Heaven. So that by the Son, there muſt neceſſarily be underſtood Chriſt in his higheſt Capacity, as he is the Word and the Wiſdom of God, in which reſpect he is

ſuperior

ſuperior to Angels in Knowledge, and in every other Perfection.

But to this we may reply, that the Knowledge here ſpoken of is not a Part of natural Science, but a Matter of mere Revelation. And therefore, tho' Chriſt, as Man, was naturally leſs knowing than the Angels, yet as he was the Meſſenger of God's revealed Will, and particularly in a Point wherein he was principally to be concerned, the Judgment of the laſt Day, it might be preſumed that Chriſt, as the Son of Man, might have the Time of that Solemnity communicated to him, tho' it remained as yet a Secret to the Angels which are in Heaven. Certain it is, that thoſe celeſtial Spirits, good and favourite Beings as they are, had but an imperfect Knowledge of the Goſpel Diſpenſation, even after it was committed into the Hands of Men; otherwiſe they would not have deſired to look into the Things of it, as St. *Peter* aſſures us they did, even at the Time when he wrote his firſt general Epiſtle, *Chap.* i. *ver.* 12. It being therefore, in

the Nature of the Thing, more wonderful that Chriſt, as Man, ſhould be ignorant of the Day and Hour in which he was to judge the World, than that the Angels of Heaven were ſo, Order and Perſpicuity both required, that Chriſt, as Man, ſhould in this Reſpect be placed above the Angels.

I hope it will be forgiven me, if I here repeat the Remark of the great and the good *Athanaſius* [tho' it has been already obſerved by a moſt able Hand, which opened the Lectures of this Foundation.] That admirable Perſon, with great Judgment, inſinuates, that if by the Son in the Text, had been meant the ſecond Perſon in the Trinity, the Ignorance of the Holy Ghoſt alſo, as to the Day of Judgment, would probably have been mentioned in order to compleat the Climax; and that therefore the Want of this ſhews, that the Scale of Beings, who were ignorant of the preciſe Time when Chriſt was to come in Judgment, extended no farther than to the Bounds between Creature and Creator, not taking in any of the divine Perſons in the ever-bleſſed Trinity.

Secondly,

Secondly, The *Arians* ſay, that whether Chriſt is mentioned here as Son of God, or only as Son of Man, it matters little; becauſe both he and every other Being is excluded from all Share of Knowledge concerning the Day and Hour of the laſt Judgment, by the Words of the Text, compared with the parallel Place in St. *Matthew*, who repreſents our Saviour as ſaying, that this Point was known to his Father only. It could not therefore, ſay they, be known to the Son in the higheſt Character, unleſs we ſuppoſe what is abſurd, that he called his divine Nature his Father.

But in Reply to every Pretence of this Kind, theſe Men have often been told, that they ought not too rigidly to inſiſt on excluſive Particles in Scripture, which oftentimes are not intended to preclude univerſally, but within certain Limits only, to be fixed by the Reaſon and Nature of the Things ſpoken of. Thus *Matthew* xi. 27. our Lord ſaith, that *no one knoweth the Father*

Father but the Son. What mad Work would an Expoſitor make, who ſhould inſiſt upon it, that every Perſon, divine or human, is here excepted from knowing the Father but the Son, and that conſequently the Father, as well as the reſt, is ignorant of himſelf? Does not plain Senſe tell us, that the excluſive Terms in this Paſſage affect only Creatures, and concern no divine Perſons at all; that our Saviour's Deſign was only to affirm that the Father never ſo fully manifeſted himſelf to Mankind, as he did in the Revelation publiſhed to the World by his Son? Many other like Paſſages have been and might be inſiſted on, which ſhew the Vanity of ſtretching excluſive Expreſſions to the utmoſt of their natural Extent. In all ſuch Caſes, the Reaſon of the Thing, and the Analogy of Scripture, muſt be our Rule of Limitation. Thus in the Paſſage of the Text, wherein the Father, according to the Letter, ſeems to ſtand ſingle in the Knowledge of the preciſe Time of our Lord's ſecond Coming; if in the Nature of the Thing, it be impoſſible for any one but the Father to know that

that Point; or ſuppoſing this poſſible, as it unqueſtionably is, if in Scripture the Father is ſtill deſcribed as alone omniſcient, and every other Perſon limited in that Perfection, Reaſon good would it be to underſtand my Text, as to the excluſive Terms of it, in the ſtricteſt Senſe, and to admit it as a Proof, that the Son, in his higheſt Character, was not omniſcient. But if, on the other Hand, Holy Writ plainly aſcribes every other divine Perfection to Chriſt, as he is the Son and the *Word*, and particularly that of infinite or unbounded Knowledge; then is it moſt reaſonable to imagine, that when the Father alone is ſaid to know the Day and Hour of the laſt Judgment, it was not Chriſt's Intent to exclude his own divine Nature, or that of the Holy Ghoſt, but only every Species of intelligent Creatures: It was only ſaying, that the Father had not as then revealed the punctual Time of his Son's ſecond Coming, neither to Prophets, nor to Angels, nor to the Man Chriſt Jeſus. Now nothing is more clearly laid down in Scripture, than the abſolute Omniſcience of Chriſt in one of his Natures.

tures. His Disciples in his Life-time say unto him, *John* xvi. 29. *We are sure that thou knowest all Things:* By this, add they, *We believe that thou camest forth from God.* For which Confession our Lord does not in the least blame his Followers, as if they ascribed too much to him, or entrenched upon his Father's sole Perfection, but approves of their Faith as built, tho' professedly built on his supposed Omniscience. After his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, the Disciples, about to elect one into the Apostolical College in *Judas*'s Room, pray unto our Lord, saying, *Thou Lord, who knowest the Hearts of all Men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.* An Expression in other Parts of Scripture, distinctive of the One God. Long after this, St. *John the Evangelist*, an inspired Writer, in the second Chapter of his Gospel, *ver.* 24. affirms of Christ that *he knew all Men.* Lastly, our Saviour himself, in the second Chapter of the *Revelation*, and the 23d *ver.* saith of himself, *I am he which searcheth the Reins and Hearts.* Just such Language as that wherein the one God proclaims his

own

own Omniſcience in the Prophet *Jeremy*, *Chap.* xvii. *ver.* 10. *I the Lord ſearch the Heart, I try the Reins.* Thus it appears, that Omniſcience is an Attribute frequently given to the Son of God in Scripture, and that in as abſolute Terms as to the Father. We ſee no Foundation for the Diſtinction made uſe of by *Arians* between derived and underived, or original Omniſcience; but the plain Voice of Revelation is, that this Perfection is common to the Father and the Son. Whatever therefore the former knoweth, the latter alſo knoweth, and neither of them can poſſibly have Secrets, excluſive of the other: So that when our Lord affirmeth, that the Son knoweth not the laſt Day and Hour, but the Father only, he muſt ſpeak of himſelf in that Nature, to which Ignorance is compatible, *viz.* his human one, and could never deſign to exalt the Knowledge of any one divine Perſon above that of another, who all agree in one Nature and Eſſence, the common Center of all poſſible Perfections.

Another

Another Topick from which, by clear Conſequence, may be deduced the Omniſcience of the *Word* or Son of God, is his Right to Adoration. I think it is agreed upon, both by *Arian* and Orthodox, that religious Worſhip and Invocation is due to him from Men upon Earth, as well as from Angels in Heaven. The former indeed diſtinguiſh the Worſhip due to the Son, by the Name of Mediatorial: For which, tho' they have no Warrant from Scripture, yet need we not to controvert it in the preſent Argument, becauſe, when admitted, it makes no difference in the Caſe: For the Worſhip of Chriſt, whether Mediatorial or Abſolute, is and muſt be a reaſonable Service. And yet the Worſhip of Chriſt, by the Church diſperſed throughout the World, can never be a reaſonable Service, if his Omniſcience be not allowed, or rather ſuppoſed. For without this he cannot know the Petitions that are offered to him by an infinite Number of Votaries at the ſame Time, from an immenſe Variety of Places throughout the vaſt Extent of the Chriſtian World.

World. He is therefore, and muſt be one, from whom no Secrets are hid, either preſent or future.

Hitherto I have argued againſt fixing the Confeſſion made by Chriſt in my Text, of his own Ignorance, on his ſuperior Nature, as he was God, by ſhewing the Weakneſs of the *Arian* Reaſonings on that Point, and from the Attribute of Omniſcience given to him in Scripture expreſly, as well as conſequentially. Let us now ſee what further Light the Text, compared with the Context, will ſupply us withall.

In the Text it is only ſaid, that the Son knoweth neither the Day nor the Hour of our Lord's Coming. Now when Chriſt, in the New Teſtament, is barely called the Son, when no Addition is made to that Expreſſion, is ſometimes ſignified his human Nature alone, and at other Times his entire [complex] Perſon, as he is both God and Man. But if the Context is to be our Guide, as it is ever allowed to be in other Difficulties ariſing from equivocal Expreſſions,

ons, it will certainly direct us to understand by the Son in the Text, the Son of Man, or Christ in his human Nature. For in neither St. *Matthew*'s Gospel, nor St. *Mark*'s, where alone our Text is found, either before or after it, do those Evangelists speak at all of Christ as the Son of God, but on both Hands, in a long and famous Discourse, still mention him under the express Appellation of the Son of Man. So that to explain the Son, spoken of in the Text, of a different Nature of Christ from what is the Subject of Discourse before and after, is to proceed arbitrarily and unreasonably; it is to set aside all the received and allowed Rules of Interpretation, merely to serve an Hypothesis. Whereas Truth wants no such unnatural Aids; but finds a Support in the easy and obvious Way.

After all it may admit of a Dispute, whether our Lord in the Text meant that himself, as the Son of Man, was really ignorant of the Day and Hour of his own Coming to Judgment. He might possibly intend no more than that he was not commissioned

miſſioned by the Father to reveal that Myſtery, among the other preternatural Truths of the Goſpel. The ſtrong Words which follow, that the Father alone knew this, will not conclude with any Certainty againſt ſuch a Meaning; any more than a parallel Saying of our Saviour's, on an Occaſion very like this, does in the 1ſt *Chap.* of *Acts*, and the 7th *ver.* where in Anſwer to this Queſtion, put to him by the Apoſtles immediately before his Aſcenſion, *viz. Lord wilt thou at this Time reſtore again the Kingdom to Iſrael?* He Replies, *It does not belong to you to know the Times and the Seaſons, which the Father hath put* ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ *in his own peculiar Power.* No Words can more emphatically expreſs a Reſerve of Knowledge, as to the Time here inquired after, to the Father, excluſive of all other Beings, than theſe do. But ſhall we therefore expound them rigourouſly, as the *Arians* do by thoſe of my Text? Shall we conclude, that Chriſt, even as he was the Son of God, was ignorant that he was not then about to reſtore again the Kingdom to *Iſrael* in any Senſe of thoſe

Words? Nay ſhall we affirm, that, as the Son of Man, he was not able to have anſwered this Quære of the Apoſtles in the Negative? Did not he know that neither then, nor at any other Time, was he to reſtore a temporal Kingdom to *Iſrael*, who had himſelf declared not long before, that his Kingdom was not of this World? Did not he know that the true Senſe of thoſe Prophecies, on which the *Jews* built their miſtaken Hopes of a ſecular Kingdom under Meſſiah the Prince, had been already in Part fulfilled in him, and that what remained to be compleated, were not immediately ripe for the Event intended by them? And yet our Lord aſſures the Apoſtles, according to the Letter of his Reply, that the Knowledge neceſſary for the Solution of their Quære, was what the Father had reſerved ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ in his own proper or peculiar Power: Meaning thereby no more than this, that the Father had not yet given it in Commiſſion to any one, fully to explain the Time and other Circumſtances of his Son's Kingdom, ſpoken of by the Prophets. Why then may we not in like Manner

Manner explain the ſtrong Words of my Text, and ſuppoſe that the Knowledge of the Day and Hour in which the Son of Man comes to Judgment, may in Strictneſs be no Part of the Queſtion, but that our Saviour meant only to affirm, that the Father had not given the Charge of revealing that Day, either to Men or Angels, or even to the Son of Man himſelf?

I do not pretend to ſay, that this was the certain Meaning of my Text. Sufficient it is for the Purpoſes of Orthodoxy, that it is a poſſible, and in ſome Sort a plauſible Interpretation: And till the Enemies to our Lord's Divinity ſhall prove the Contrary to be true, which they will find, if I am not much miſtaken, no eaſy Taſk, they will have no Right to urge the Text any more, as a Teſtimony againſt the Omniſcience of the Son of God, and conſequently againſt his Divinity.

To him therefore, as well as to the other divine Perſons in the Trinity, be aſcribed, &c.

SERMON IV.

1 Cor. xv. 28.

When all Things ſhall be ſubdued unto him, then ſhall the Son alſo himſelf be ſubject unto him that put all Things under him, that God may be all in all.

IN theſe Words, the Apoſtle plainly affirms two Things of the Son. *Firſt*, That all Things were put under him; the Conſequence of which is, that originally, and by Nature, he was not Lord of all Things, but received his Kingdom by Inveſtiture, from ſome ſuperior Being. *Secondly*, That when this Son ſhall, by the

Power lodged with him, have ſubdued all his Enemies, and ſhall have, as St. *Paul* before expreſſed himſelf, put down all Rule, and all Authority and Power, then ſhall he, the Son himſelf, be ſubject unto him, from whom he received his Power and kingly Authority. It is no leſs plain likewiſe, that by the Son in my Text, is meant Chriſt our Lord, and our Redeemer.

But the great Queſtion is, whether, by the Son, concerning the Original and Duration of whoſe Kingdom my Text ſpeaks, be meant Chriſt in both, or in one of his Natures only? If the former, if Chriſt, as he was the Word and Son of God, had originally no Power or Dominion, but was in Time veſted therewith, and is hereafter to ſurrender, or give it up again, and to become like other Beings, ſubject to the one ſupreme Lord of all Beings, then he cannot be truly and eſſentially God: For ſupreme Power and Dominion are inſeparable to Divinity, they can neither be conferred

ferred upon it, nor taken from it, nor abſolutely reſigned by it.

But if by the Son in the Text, is meant the Son of Man, or Chriſt in his human Nature, then by the Things that were put under him, will eaſily be underſtood his mediatorial Kingdom, commencing upon his Reſurrection; at which Time, as himſelf declares, *Matt.* xxviii. 18. *All Power was given to him in Heaven and in Earth.* This Kingdom, and this Power, will ſubſiſt no longer than till its Uſes have all been fully anſwered, till the End of all Things, when the Son of Man ſhall have ſubdued all the Powers of Death and Hell, and his Subjects, both good and bad, ſhall be conſigned over to their final and unalterable State.

But then the Text, thus underſtood, will be no valid Teſtimony, indeed no Teſtimony at all againſt the real and eſſential Deity of Chriſt; becauſe it will not hinder, but that, beſides the Power and Dominion conferred on the human Nature

of Chriſt before his Aſcenſion, and which hereafter is to be given up again to the original Donor, he might likewiſe, as God, have had from Everlaſting all Power, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, which he never will, nor can reſign, but ever execute jointly, with the other divine Perſons, in the adorable Trinity.

In order therefore to reſolve ſo important a Queſtion, as whether my Text hurts the Catholick Doctrine of our bleſſed Saviour's real and conſubſtantial Divinity or no, let us carefully examine both Sides of the Queſtion before us, and firſt inquire, whether the Kingdom of Chriſt, and his future Subjection ſpoken of in the Text, can or may be underſtood relatively to him, as he is the Son of God, or God the Word.

And here I think it may ſafely be affirmed, that if Scripture be uniform and conſiſtent with itſelf, this cannot poſſibly be St. *Paul*'s Meaning in the Words of my Text. For in the firſt Place, St. *John* affirms

firms of the Word, *that is*, the ſuperior Nature of Chriſt, *that in the Beginning he was God.* But will any one ſuppoſe, that a Being, who is God, ſhould be deſtitute of Power and Dominion, and ſhould need to have any Thing put under him. Is it not abſurd, at firſt Hearing, to be told, that God, as God, had Sovereignty conferred upon him, and at an aſſigned Period muſt deliver it up; and like other Beings, diveſted of a delegated Authority, muſt thenceforward remain under precarious Subjection?

Secondly, St. *John* affirms likewiſe, that *this God, the Word, and Son of God, made all Things.* Nay, St. *Paul* himſelf alſo aſſerts, *Col.* i. 16. *That by him were all Things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, viſible and inviſible.* Has not then the Potter Power over his own Clay; or did this divine Architect ever transfer the Power, belonging to him in Right of Creation, over the Works of his own Hands, ſo as to need a new Inveſtiture of Dominion within his own Creation?

The

The World was his from the Beginning, and all that is therein, by the cleareſt and moſt undoubted of all Titles; and therefore of him, in his divine and creative Capacity, St. *Paul* could not ſpeak, in my Text, when he ſuppoſes, that all Things were put under him gradually, and in Proceſs of Time. And as his Right to Dominion over his own Creatures was original and underived, ſo he can never ſurrender it up to another. As well may he reſign his Relation to all Things as their Creator, as that of being their King and Lord; and till he ceaſes to have been their Maker, he can never ceaſe to be their Governor. We are therefore under an apparent Neceſſity of underſtanding the Apoſtle to ſpeak in the Text, of a Kingdom of Chriſt which had a Beginning, and was defeaſible, and not of that Dominion, which accrued to him, as the God and Maker of all Things.

Thirdly, The ſame Apoſtle, who, in the Words of my Text, mentions a Kingdom of Chriſt to be delivered up to the Father, from whom it was originally a Grant, does elſe-

elſewhere aſcribe Worſhip, and conſequently Dominion to him, before his mediatorial Power and Kingdom was conferred upon him, and as extended to Beings, who had no Concern of their own in that gracious Office of his, being no Subjects to him in his mediatorial Sovereignty. For in his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, *Again*, ſaith he, *when he*, i. e. God, *bringeth the firſt Begotten into the World, he ſaith, And let all the Angels of God worſhip him*, i. e. his Son conſidered in the higheſt Character and Capacity, that Son by whom he made the Worlds, and who upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Power. Chriſt therefore, in one of his Natures, had a Title to the Worſhip of Angels, and conſequently to Dominion over them, long before the Commencement of his mediatorial Kingdom, long before all Power in Heaven and in Earth was given unto him. I make a Right to worſhip, neceſſarily to imply a Right to Dominion over the Worſhippers; and in ſo doing, I think I have the concurrent Senſe of Mankind. For Worſhip, in the Nature of the Act, ſuppoſes a Dependance upon

upon the Object worſhipped. Chriſt then was the Lord and King of heavenly Creatures before his Incarnation, and that he was then alſo the Owner of the lower World, is plain from the Apoſtle St. *John*, who deſcribes the Word, as coming to his own, when he came down below and took Fleſh. *He came to his own, and his own received him not.* Not his own by Grant or Donation from another, but by Right of Creation, mentioned by St. *John* in the Verſe immediately foregoing. But of this Dominion St. *Paul* could not ſpeak in the Text, when he ſays, *The Son is to be ſubject unto him that put all Things under him.* For if the Son, in no Nature or Capacity of his, is henceforward to have Dominion, he muſt then entirely ceaſe to be an Object of Worſhip, both to Angels and Men, contrary to the plaineſt Intimations of Scripture. For thus St. *Paul*, *Rom.* ix. 5. affirms of Chriſt, *that he is over all, God bleſſed*; that is, worſhipped and adored *for ever.* I ſhall not reſt the Proof of this Point ſingly on this Paſſage, becauſe the Application of it to Chriſt, as God, is contro-

troverted by the *Arians*, but ſhall ſubjoin another, againſt which no Exception is or can be offered, from *Rev.* v. 13. *And every Creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and ſuch as are in the Sea, and all that are in them heard I, ſaying, Bleſſing, Honour, Glory and Power be unto him that ſitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* The Lamb therefore, that is, the Word and Son of God, will never be without Power, Honour and Glory, any more than he that ſitteth upon the Throne, he Father himſelf, will be. Of his Kingdom and Glory there will be no End. So that whatever elſe the Subjection ſpoken of in my Text may mean, it is nothing that can affect the divine Nature or Prerogative of the Son: But after he has delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, jointly with him will he be entitled to, and poſſeſſed of Bleſſing, Honour, Glory and Power, for ever and ever.

Fourthly, The Subjection of the Son, at the End of all Things, to him who put

them all under him, cannot imply any future Inequality in Power between these two divine Persons, without proving more than the *Arians* would be willing to admit; and therefore ought not in Prudence, at least, to be urged by them to any such Purpose: For if the Son, after delivering up the Kingdom to his Father, becomes thenceforward subject unto him, will it not follow by necessary Consequence, that before such Delivery, and so long as the Son reigned, the Father was not superior to him in Power, but that he was equal with, and independent of the Father? Will the *Arians*, or indeed can they, consistently with their own Principles, admit of such a periodical Equality, commencing and commensurate with the Son's mediatorial Kingdom? If this be the Case, as it plainly is, they are as much interested against the Conclusion they would draw from this Passage, as the Orthodox themselves are or can be. They are as much concerned as we are, to look out for a different Interpretation, and can no more stand their Ground, upon a Supposition that St. *Paul* meant

meant the Son will be ſubject to the Father, ſo as to become abſolutely and entirely unequal with and inferior to him, than we can. For if once they grant, that the Son might, during any aſſignable Period, have been co-equal with the Father in Power or Dominion, they will have no Pretence for arguing againſt a perpetual Co-equality in that Reſpect, from the Reaſon and Nature of Things. And if the Father could poſſibly make the Son an equal Sharer of his own infinite Power after his Reſurrection, what ſhould hinder, but that he might have communicated to him in like Manner, that and every other divine Perfection from all Eternity?

Fifthly, If the Subjection of the Son at the End of all Things, had reſpected his divine Nature, how comes it to paſs, that we hear nothing of the Holy Ghoſt likewiſe delivering up his Power, and becoming ſubject to him that ſent him? That bleſſed Spirit had a mighty Share in the Oeconomy of Man's Redemption, and by him the whole Body of the Church is governed,

verned, as well as ſanctified. Muſt the Son therefore, whom the *Arians* make much ſuperior to the Holy Ghoſt, ſurrender up his high Honours, whilſt the Holy Ghoſt is permitted to retain his. And if he likewiſe is to become ſubject, how comes it to paſs, the Scripture is altogether ſilent about ſuch Surrendry? The beſt Solution of this Quære is, that the Son will deliver up no Power hereafter, but what was veſted in him as he was Man, nor become ſubject in any other Capacity; and the Holy Ghoſt having no Powers, but what belonged to him as true and eſſential God, neither will, nor can ſurrender, or become ſubject. Upon the whole then, it appears that the Subjection of the Son to the Father, ſpoken of in my Text, cannot, for many Reaſons, be underſtood of Chriſt in his ſuperior Nature, in which he was in the Beginning with God, and was God, in which he made all Things viſible and inviſible; and conſequently, that ſuch Subjection relating only to him, as the Son of Man, cannot affect that other Nature of his

his, in which he ever was, and ever will be, equal with the Father.

But beſides this, the Context ſeems to make it little leſs than neceſſary, that by the Son himſelf, who hereafter is to be ſubject, ſhould be meant the Son of Man, or the human Nature of Chriſt. For in this Nature it was that he became our Mediator and our High Prieſt; in this he aſcended into Heaven, and ſat on the right Hand of the Majeſty on high, there to reign, as was foretold in the 110th *Pſalm*, *Till God ſhould make his Enemies his Foot-ſtool.* There alſo God declared him by Oath a Prieſt for ever, after the Order of *Melchiſedech.* To this famous Prediction, which relates thus evidently to the human Nature of Chriſt, St. *Paul* alludes throughout his whole Diſcourſe, concerning the Reign and ſubſequent Subjection of Chriſt, and therefore aſſuredly ſpake therein, as *David* before him did, of the Meſſiah, as he was Man. To make this plainer, in the 24th Verſe of this Chapter, in which the Delivery of a Kingdom to God is firſt

mentioned, it is to be noted, that he, by whom this Surrendry is to be made, is Chriſt, juſt before diſtinguiſhed in a Character entirely human, Chriſt at his coming or laſt Appearance.

In vain therefore is it, that the Enemies to our bleſſed Lord's Divinity, endeavour to prove his Inferiority to the Father, from a Paſſage which makes him ſubject to the Father, in ſuch a Senſe only, as may be admitted without any Impeachment of that fundamental Truth. For whilſt we aſſert that he was equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead, we freely admit, that he was inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood: And while we earneſtly contend, that of his Kingdom, as he is the one Supreme God with the Father, there is no End; ſo we readily own, that his Reign, as he is the Mediator between God and Man, the Man Chriſt Jeſus, may and will be determined by that God, who firſt veſted him therewith, and at the ſame Time limited the Duration of his Reign, when he ſaid unto him, *Sit thou on my right*

right Hand, till I make thine Enemies thy Footſtool.

But here probably we ſhall be asked, ſince Chriſt, as the Son of Man, even during his Reign, was ſubject unto God, and as the Son of God was always equal with him, what Senſe is there in St. *Paul*'s Expreſſion, *That the Son himſelf ſhall be ſubject unto him that put all Things under him, that God may be all in all.* The obvious Meaning of the Word is, that thereby is made an Alteration in the Son's Condition, from being independent to a State of Subjection, which Meaning, upon the Catholick Hypotheſis, ſeems quite explained away.

To which I anſwer, that the very ſame original Word, which the Interpreters here render ſubject, is, in the Beginning of the Verſe of my Text, when applied to the Enemies of Chriſt, tranſlated, *ſhall be ſubdued:* Though there alſo it might with equal Propriety have been ſaid, when all Things ſhall be ſubject unto him. Now

in right, all these Things, all the Enemies of Christ were subject unto him, that is, they owed him Obedience from the Commencement of his Reign, from the first Moment that all Power was given unto him in Heaven and in Earth. Only, in Fact, they were permitted to exercise an Authority for some Time longer, and particularly Death, the last of them, was not actually put out of Power till the general Resurrection had taken Effect. To become subject therefore to another, in the Language of St. *Paul*, does not denote, that before such Subjection the Parties were equal to each other, and that neither owed the other any Obedience or Subjection; but his Meaning only is by Subjection, that the Party subjected is divested of that Power which he before actually exercised. To apply this then to the Case before us, when the Apostle says, *that the Son himself*, meaning Christ as Man, *shall be subject unto God*, he was far from meaning, that before this Event he owed no Submission to him, in that Capacity, only he chuses to express the Surrendry of his King-

Kingdom, and the Ceſſation of his mediatorial Power, by that Phraſe, as immediately before he had, in like Manner, expreſſed the Ceſſation and Abolition of that Dominion, which the Enemies of Chriſt had before exerciſed. The only Difference in the two Caſes was, that the Enemies of Chriſt's Kingdom unwillingly parted with their Power, he extorted it from them, and therefore they were properly ſubdued by him or to him; whereas Chriſt ſurrenders his Kingdom to God voluntarily, and could not ſtrictly be ſaid to be ſubdued. Only the Apoſtle continues the Uſe of the Expreſſion to denote that, wherein the two Caſes were alike, *viz.* that in both there was a Ceſſation, and a final End of that Power which had been exerciſed before. In ſhort, he did not mean, that the Son, before his Subjection to God, owed or paid him leſs Submiſſion than afterwards; but that, whereas, before he had an actual Kingdom and exerciſed Authority and Juriſdiction, at the End of all Things he will do ſo no more, but *God will be all in all*, i. e. all Power and Dominion, before exerciſed,

under other Names, will then ceaſe, and every Diſtinction of Sovereignty will thenceforward be ſwallowed up in that of God, ruling alone without Delegates over his Creatures. This ſeems to be the natural Senſe of the Apoſtle's Words, as it is the neceſſary Conſequence of what goes immediately before: For Chriſt was not to deliver up the Kingdom to God, till he had put down all Rule, Authority, and Power. So that when he had further ſurrendered up his own likewiſe, nothing of this Kind could remain or ſubſiſt, but the indefeaſible and eternal Empire of God over his moral and intelligent Creatures. *That God may be all in all*, therefore, is the ſame as if St. *Paul* had ſaid, and thus it will come to paſs, that God will be the only Sovereign in Nature. To this Senſe of God's being *all in all*, we are alſo led by another Paſſage in the Writings of St. *Paul*, which is nearly parallel to it, *viz. Col.* iii. 11. where meaning to ſay, that among thoſe who were converted to Chriſtianity, all worldly Diſtinctions ſhould ceaſe. He expreſſes himſelf thus, *There is neither* Greek

Greek *nor* Jew, *Circumciſion nor Uncircumciſion*, Scythian, Barbarian, *Bond nor Free, but Chriſt is all and in all*, i. e. In the new Life, all other Names ſhall be loſt or buried in that of Chriſtian. So when God is *all in all*, we ſhall hear no more of the Servants of Men, nor of the Tyranny of Sin and Death, nor even of the mediatorial Sovereignty of Chriſt, nor of any other Subjection, beſides that of intelligent Creatures to God their Maker. But who then is this God, who, in Strictneſs of Speech, hereafter, will be the only Potentate? Not the Father only, nor he jointly with the Son, and excluſive of the Holy Ghoſt, but the whole three Perſons in the undivided Eſſence of the Deity. To whom therefore be given, as is moſt due, all Honour, Glory, *&c.*

SERMON V.

JOHN xiv. 28.

Ye have heard how I ſaid unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, becauſe I ſaid, I go unto the Father: For my Father is greater than I.

OUR bleſſed Lord well knowing that his Death would extremely terrify his Diſciples, and that his entire bodily Abſence from them after his Aſcenſion was an Event, the Proſpect of which would give them no ſmall Uneaſineſs, makes it his Buſineſs to prepare them for both theſe Incidents in the Chapter of my

my Text. And the better to do this, upon the mention of each he adds ſome conſolatory Promiſe, that ſhould ſupport their Spirits under the unexpected Tidings. Thus, in the 12th *ver.* he introduces his going to the Father as a Reaſon why they, the Apoſtles, ſhould afterwards do the ſame, and greater Works than he had done. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, he that believeth on me, the Works that I do, ſhall he do alſo: And greater Works than theſe ſhall he do; becauſe I go unto my Father.* To which he immediately ſubjoins a repeated Declaration, that whatſoever they ſhould aſk in his Name he will do. Over and above all this, he gives them the Aſſurance of another Comforter, who, after his entire Departure, and going to the Father, ſhould take his Place among them, and abide with them forever, even the Spirit of Truth. Again, in the 18th *ver.* to relieve them under the Sorrows that his firſt Departure from them by his Death would occaſion, he ſays, *I will not leave you comfortleſs*; or, as the *Greek* might more ſtrongly be rendered, *I will not leave you Orphans, I will come*

come unto you, meaning his Reſurrection, and the Abode that he would continue for ſome time after to make with them. But finding that this Method of Addreſs, the Promiſe of perſonal Advantages, and equal Comforts in another Way, had little or no Effect upon his Hearers, but that their Heart was ſtill troubled, and they were afraid for his Departure from them, eſpecially for his final One, when he ſhould go to the Father; he alters his Manner of Application in the Words of my Text, trying to ſhame them out of their Fears and Concern, from the Principles of Love and Gratitude, which they ought, and did profeſs for him. *Ye have heard how I ſaid unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice; becauſe I ſaid, I go unto the Father: For my Father is greater than I.*

From the laſt Words of the Text, *viz. For my Father is greater than I*, the *Arians*, and other Enemies to our Lord's conſubſtantial Divinity, argue ſtrongly for their own Opinions. An Inequality, in ſome Senſe

Senſe or other, between Chriſt and the Father, is here aſſerted in direct Terms. And nothing will ſerve the Men above-mentioned, but that our Lord meant an Inferiority of his own higheſt Nature to that of the Father, ſuch an Inferiority, as will make him diſtinct in Subſtance, as well as Perſon, from the Father, and that conſequently he cannot be one God with him.

Certain it is, that the Words themſelves are general, and, taken a-part, may relate either to the human or divine Nature of our Lord. But to which of theſe two they moſt probably belong, can only be determined by the Analogy of Scripture Doctrine, concerning the Equality or Inequality of the Son's divine Nature with that of the Father, together with the Scope and Intent of our Lord's Words, about which the preſent Conteſt is raiſed. If our Lord, or the Evangeliſts, and other Penmen of the New Teſtament, ſpeak of Chriſt in ſuch a Manner as to give us Reaſon to think that, in his higheſt Capacity, he was eſſentially inferior to the Father; then it may be concluded,

cluded, that in this Senſe alſo the Words of the Text are to be underſtood: Eſpecially if ſuch a Senſe agrees likewiſe with the Occaſion and View, wherewith our Lord ſpake them. But if, on the other Hand, the Analogy of the whole New Teſtament points quite another Way; if both Chriſt and his Apoſtles ſpeak of the Son in his ſuperior Nature, in ſuch a Manner, as that it would be abſurd to admit of any eſſential Inequality between him, thus conſidered, and the Father; then is he by no Means to be underſtood, in my Text, as declaring, that his Father was greater than he in his divine Nature, in any eſſential Reſpect. And, in ſuch a Caſe, 'tis a great Chance but we find, that the *Arian* Senſe of thoſe Words is as foreign, and as inconſiſtent with the Deſign of them, as it is with the Tenour and Analogy of the New Teſtament in general.

Let us then, *Firſt*, conſider, what the Writings of the new Covenant deliver concerning the ſuperior or divine Nature of Chriſt; and whether from thence we can collect,

collect, that the Father is eſſentially greater than his only begotten Son.

And *Firſt*, Thoſe Scriptures are clear in aſſerting, that the Father and Son are one, not in Will and voluntary Conſent only, but alſo in a natural Reſpect, one in Subſtance, *e. g. John* x. 30. our Lord ſays, *I and the Father are one.* An Expreſſion ſo clearly implying Unity of divine Subſtance, and Sameneſs of Nature with the Father, that, upon the firſt hearing of it, the *Jews* took up Stones to ſtone him as a Blaſphemer, alledging, that, by the Saying above-mentioned, he who was but Man, made himſelf God. Now if the Father and Son are one God, neither of them, in reſpect of Eſſence, can be greater or leſs than the other. Unity, in the Nature of Things, excludes all Poſſibility of Compariſon, becauſe the ſame Subſtance cannot be greater or leſs than itſelf. When therefore our Lord, in the Text, admits the Father to be greater than he, ſure we are, that, whatever elſe he meant, he intended no Contradiction to his other Saying, that

he

he and the Father were one: But contradictory thoſe Sayings muſt be, if underſtood in the ſame Senſe: If our Lord in both ſpake of himſelf, as he was God. For as God he muſt be one in Nature and Subſtance with the Father; unleſs we will run into the abſurd Opinion of many Gods: And if the Father and Son, being each God, are yet but one God, neither of them can be greater, nor leſs than the other. So that when our Lord ſaid, *I and the Father are one*; it was, by Neceſſity, and immediate Conſequence, the ſame as if he had ſaid, *I and the Father are equal.* Impoſſible therefore is it that Chriſt, ſpeaking of himſelf and his Father, in the ſame Reſpect, ſhould ſay, *My Father is greater than I.*

Secondly, The Scriptures of the New Teſtament aſcribe the very ſame eſſential Attributes to the Son, that they aſcribe unto the Father. As firſt in general, *John* xvi. 15. our Lord ſaith, *All things that the Father hath are mine.* And again, *Chap.* xvii. *ver.* 10. *All mine are thine, and thine are mine.* We cannot hereby under-

ſtand leſs than that, whatever eſſential Perfections the Father hath, theſe the Son hath alſo. And accordingly, in the ſecond Place, every particular Attribute, that either the Light of Reaſon or Revelation diſcovers, as neceſſarily belonging to the Deity, is, in the New Teſtament, given to the Son. *e. g.* Is the Father eternal? Is he *Alpha* and *Omega*, the firſt and the laſt? So alſo is the Son, *Rev.* i. 11. Was the Father in the Beginning God? So alſo was the Son or Word. He was in the Beginning with God, and even then he was God. Is the Father immutable, who changes not, and one in whom is no Variableneſs, nor Shadow of Turning? So alſo is the Son. For to him the inſpired Writer to the *Hebrews* applies what the *Pſalmiſt* ſaith unto God, *viz.* *They*, [*the Heavens and the Earth*,] *ſhall periſh*; *but thou remaineſt*; *they ſhall be changed*, *but thou art the ſame.* (*Heb.* i. 10, 11, 12.) Again, is the Father omniſcient? Does he even ſearch the Heart, and try the Reins? So alſo does the Son. *All Things*, ſaith the Author to the *Hebrews*, *Chap.* iv. *are naked*

ed and opened unto the Eyes of him; he is a Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart. And to the ſame Purpoſe Chriſt ſpeaks of himſelf, *Rev.* ii. 23. *I am he that ſearcheth the Reins and the Heart.* Is God the Father Omnipreſent? So likewiſe is God the Son. How elſe could he fulfill his Promiſe to the Church, diſperſed throughout the World, and be with them always? How could he create all things, and how by him could all things conſiſt, *i. e.* be preſerved and ſuſtained, if he was not preſent with all things in Heaven, in Earth, and under the Earth, *i. e.* if he was not omnipreſent? *Laſtly*, Is the Father Almighty? So is the Son, the ὁ παντοκράτωρ the Almighty. *Rev.* i. 8. I know the *Arians* contend, that this Title is there given to the Father. But their true Reaſon for ſaying ſo is, that the contrary Suppoſition would be ruinous to their Scheme: They are forced therefore to beg the Queſtion, and arbitrarily give away from the Son what the Scripture, according to the allowed Rule of Interpretation, predicates of him, For the *ver.* imme-

diately preceding, indiſputably belongs to the Son. For which Reaſon the *ver.* in Diſpute, without evident Neceſſity, which is not the Caſe here, muſt and ſhould refer to the ſame Antecedent. I might add, that the *Arians* introduce the Father, as ſpeaking of himſelf, which is by no Means likely to be the Truth: Becauſe throughout the *Revelations* there is no clear Inſtance of any divine Interlocutor, beſides the Son: But I need inſiſt no longer on this Paſſage; becauſe, tho' it be a very ſtrong and pertinent one, we have others ſufficient for the Purpoſe, particularly *Phil.* iii. 21. where St. *Paul* ſpeaks of *the working* or Energy, *whereby* Chriſt *is able to ſubdue all things to himſelf.* Chriſt, therefore, ſeeing he has every Attribute eſſential to the Deity in common with the Father, muſt be equal with him. For what is it that makes any one Being ſuperior to another, but higher Attributes or Powers? And ſince the natural and neceſſary Prerogatives of theſe divine Perſons are the ſame, neither of them, as God, can be greater than the other.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The New Teſtament Writers, in one or two Paſſages, expreſly aſſert the Equality of the Son to the Father. St. *Paul*, *Phil.* ii. 6. affirms, that Chriſt Jeſus *thought it not Robbery to be equal with God*. I very well know that the Propriety of this Rendering is much queſtioned by the Adverſaries, with whom at preſent we have to do. But what in a good Meaſure juſtifies the current Verſion is, that it was not taken up to ſerve a Turn, or to favour the Orthodox Cauſe againſt *Arianiſm*, but ſtood in the oldeſt *Latin* Verſion, and as ſuch is cited even in the ſecond Century, above an Age before *Arius* was heard of in the World: Nor did *Jerom*, when he reformed this ancient Verſion, ſee any Cauſe to alter it in the Inſtance before us. And after all, what Advantage would it be to our Adverſaries, if inſtead of the preſent Rendering, *he thought it not Robbery to be equal with God*, we ſhould admit theirs, and make St. *Paul* ſay, that Chriſt Jeſus thought it not Robbery to be *as* God. They do not conſider, that upon Scripture Principles it is equally

blaſphemous and piacular to ſay, that any other Being is as God כאל ἴσα Θεῷ, as to ſay he is ἴσος Θεῷ equal with God. *There is none like thee*, ſays Holy *David*. 1 *Chron.* xvii. 21. And again, *Pſal.* lxxxvi. 8. *Among the Gods is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any Works like unto thy Works.* Many more ſuch ſayings we find in the Prophets. So jealous are the ſacred Writings of the Honour of God, that they will not endure any Compariſon between other Beings and him. And no Wonder: For in their Language, to be like God, or as God was the ſame, as to be equal with him: And Works like his, were Works equal to, *i. e.* as wonderful as his. It is one of the Characters of Antichriſt, that he ſitteth in the Temple ὡς Θεὸς, as God. Angels, and Magiſtrates, on Account of diſtant and general Reſemblances, are called Gods in Holy Writ: But to forbid all formal Compariſon between God and the higheſt of his Creatures, *Michael*, the chief of the Angels, had his Name given him, importing that none is as God. Since therefore to be as God in the Idiom of Scripture,

Scripture, is not applicable to any Being who is not God, and is to all Intents and Purpoſes the ſame as being equal with God; the Point in View of the Son's being equal with the Father, is effectually made good from this Paſſage of the *Philippians*, which way ſoever it be rendered.

But farther, St. *John*, *Chap.* v. 18. of his Goſpel, tells us, that *the Jews ſought the more to kill Jeſus, becauſe he not only had broken the Sabbath: But ſaid alſo, that God was his Father, making himſelf equal with God.* This Paſſage is the more remarkable, becauſe it is the Evangeliſt's own Concluſion, that Chriſt ſaying God was his Father, made himſelf equal with God. Upon the whole then, as Chriſt in Scripture is declared to be equal with the Father, in Conſequence of his being in the Form of God, and alſo of his being, in a ſtrict Senſe, the Son of God: So when he affirms in my Text, that the *Father is greater than He*, we muſt underſtand him to mean it not with Reſpect to his divine Nature, as ſuch.

We are in the next Place to conſider the true Import of our Lord's Saying in my Text, that his Father was greater than He. And ſince it appears, contrary to the Tenor of the New Teſtament Writings, to apply it to Chriſt in his divine Nature, we muſt neceſſarily explain it with Relation to his Humanity.

The Truth is, that if the Analogy of Scripture had permitted us to do otherwiſe, the Context, and the Scope of the Paſſage, would almoſt force us into this Interpretation. For the human Nature of Chriſt, upon every Suppoſition, was to gain infinitly more by his Exaltation into Heaven, than his pre-exiſtent or divine One. The Love therefore of the Diſciples for our Lord, which rightly directed ſhould have made them rejoice, becauſe he went unto the Father, was the Love of that Nature of his, which was moſt honoured and magnified by this Removal from the World below to that above, *i. e.* his human One. And to convince them, that the Exchange of Earth

Earth for Heaven was an Advantage to him, at which whoſoever loved him ought to rejoice, he had only occaſion to put them in Mind, that in the Nature, wherein he went to the Father, he was inferior to him, and conſequently in that Nature capable of receiving high Honours and Prerogatives from him. In ſuch an Argument, if the Thing had been poſſible, it is ſcarce to be ſuppoſed, that our Lord would look out for a Medium of Proof, ſtronger than the preſent Exigence required; that to demonſtrate the Advantages accruing to his human Nature by aſcending to his Father, he ſhould aſſert the Superiority of his Father to himſelf in both his Natures, where his Superiority, in the loweſt of them, was abundantly ſufficient.

In a Word, our Saviour's Reaſoning with his Diſciples in the Text ſeems plainly this. Your Concern for my leaving you, and going to my Father, is not out of Love to me, but to yourſelves, and your own Intereſts: For I ſhould ſuffer by ſtaying here with you. For ſo long a Time ſhall

I loſe the Glories and Beatitudes which the Father is able to beſtow on me when I go unto him. For whether you know and conſider it or not, the Father is greater than I; and conſequently you ought to rejoice at my leaving you, to dwell with one that is capable of advancing me to a higher Dignity than I am at preſent poſſeſſed of. This, I ſay, ſeems to be the plain and natural Force of our Saviour's Argument in the Text.

But ſtill ſome will tell us, that our Lord in aſſerting that the Father was greater than He, as he was Man, would have ſaid no more than what was ſelf-evident and known to every one, and owned by every one; that ſuch Aſſertions are jejune, and unworthy of him, who ſpake as never Man ſpake; and that therefore this could never be all his Meaning.

In Anſwer to which I ſhall only put the Objectors in Mind, that ſelf-evident, and, as they call them, jejune Aſſertions, are frequent in Scripture, and have their Uſe on ſuch Occaſions as that in my Text. Thus

Thus the Spirit of God, to ſhame Men out of a vain Hope, that they ſhall eſcape the Vengeance of God denounced againſt impenitent Sinners, makes no Scruple of leaving this very plain Truth upon ſacred Record, that God is not a Man. *God is not a Man that he ſhould lie, nor the Son of Man that he ſhould repent.* Again, the Prophet *Iſaiah*, in order to ſet the Folly of thoſe *Iſraelites* in the livelieſt Colours, who, againſt expreſs Precept, went in his Days to *Egypt* for Help, puts them in Mind of what they and every one elſe knew as well as he, that the *Egyptians* are Men, and not God, and their Horſes Fleſh, and not Spirit. *Jer.* xxxi. 3. In both Caſes the Deſign of Scripture is not directly to inform and inſtruct, but to reproach wicked and unreaſonable Men with acting, as if the contrary to theſe ſelf-evident Propoſitions had been the Truth. So likewiſe, in the Caſe before us, our Lord in affirming, that the Father was greater than he in his human Nature, meant not to inſtruct them in a Point that they miſ-

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underſtood, or were ignorant of before; but only fix a Brand on their unreaſonable Concern for his Perſon at Departure from them into Heaven, as ſeemingly founded on the groſſeſt Miſtake, *viz*, that the Father could not exalt his human Nature higher than it was already, not being greater than he. For on the contrary Suppoſition they grieved and ſorrowed for his Advancement, which was very far from being an Argument that they loved him.

Thus it appears upon the whole, that the Paſſage of my Text, wherein our Saviour ſays, *My Father is greater than I*, affords no Countenance to the *Arian* Hypotheſis of Chriſt's being in both his Natures inferior to the Father.

To him therefore it is warrantable, every Way juſt and right, that we give, jointly with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, all Honour and Glory, Might, Majeſty, *&c.*

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SERMON VI.

1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.

For tho' there be that are called Gods, whether in Heaven or in Earth (as there be Gods many and Lords many) but to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all Things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all Things, and we by him.

TWO Things in these Words are observed by the *Arians*, as favouring their Scheme. The first is, that the Father, in Contradistinction to all others, is declared to be the one, or only God of the Christians. The second is the Difference of Expression, concerning the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, with Rela-

Relation to the Share which each of them had in producing of all Things. The Father is ſaid to be he, of whom ἐξ οὗ are all Things: The Lord Jeſus Chriſt is the one Lord, by whom δι' οὗ are all Things.

That there is a Difference made by the Apoſtle, between theſe two divine Perſons, is too evident to be denied. But the Queſtion between us and the *Arians* is, whether the Diſtinction will prove, as they would have it, that the Father is, excluſive of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the one true eſſential God, and the firſt Cauſe of all Things. This we entirely deny, and the Negative is what I hope fully to make out at this Time.

But before I enter upon this Point, it will be proper to conſider what gave Occaſion to theſe Words of the Apoſtle, in Hopes that the Context may give us, as in ſome Caſes it does, ſome Light into his Meaning.

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It appears then, that this firſt Epiſtle of St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians* was framed on two Occaſions. The firſt was ſome private Intelligence he had received from the Houſehold of *Chloe*, concerning ſome Diſſentions and Irregularities that had ſprung up in the Church of *Corinth*. The ſecond was a Letter he had received from that Church at large, deſiring his Information in ſome dubious Caſes of Conſcience and Diſcipline. With anſwering the firſt of theſe he begins this Epiſtle, and ſpeaks entirely to it in the ſix firſt Chapters. The 7th Chapter begins with theſe Words, *Now concerning the Things whereof ye write unto me.* Which plainly ſhews, that he was then entering upon a Conſideration of the Letter, which the Church of *Corinth*, at large, had ſent unto him. The firſt of their Queries, as appears from the firſt Verſe of the ſeventh Chapter, was concerning the Expediency of Marriage, and of Cohabitation in Wedlock, where one of the Parties was an Unbeliever. And to this St. *Paul* ſpeaks fully and ſolely throughout

that Chapter. The ſecond Query, wherewith the Chapter of the Text begins, related to the Lawfulneſs of eating or touching thoſe Things that are offered in Sacrifice unto Idols. It ſhould ſeem, that ſome in the Church of *Corinth* eat ſuch Things as oft as Occaſion offered, and without any Diſtinction of Caſes, urging in their Defence, that they knew Idols to be nothing, *i. e.* to have no real, nor ſo much as relative Divinity in them, but to be the mere Creatures of Pagan Ignorance and Superſtition. From whence they concluded, that in eating Meats offered unto them, without the leaſt Intention of doing Honour, or paying any Kind of religious Worſhip, they acted nothing ſinful, or unworthy of their Chriſtian Profeſſion. They did not at ſuch Times feaſt upon a Sacrifice, but regarded what was before them as common Meat, and partook of it to ſerve the natural Ends of Eating only. And this Defence of theirs, our Apoſtle allows to be ſo far good as the Principle goes on which it is built. He allows that an Idol is nothing in the World, there being

ing none other God but one. He declares in the Words of my Text, that tho' in the vulgar Account, and according to common Language, there are many celeſtial and terreſtrial Gods, many, who under the Name of Gods and Lords, receive divine Honours and Oblations; yet to Chriſtians, who are competently inſtructed in their Religion, there is but one Object of Worſhip, eminently called God, *i. e.* the Father, and with equal Emphaſis called the Lord, that is, Jeſus Chriſt. But tho' this Chriſtian Knowledge ſecured the Owners of it from ſinning againſt their own Conſcience and Conviction, when they ate of thoſe Things which were offered unto Idols, yet, in ſo doing, they might err ſometimes againſt the great Law of Charity. All had not the neceſſary Knowledge concerning the Vanity and Futility of *Heathen* Idols, for want of which, as oft as they ate of ſuch Things as were offered to them, they did, or intended to do, religious Honour to them, and thereby ſinned. He adds, that weak or ignorant Chriſtians would be emboldened to proceed in ſuch

unlawful Practices, if they obſerved the more Knowing to ſit at Meat in the Idol's Temple: They would judge from their Actions, and thereby be miſled for want of knowing their inward Principle or Motive of Action. He concludes therefore, that tho' the intelligent Chriſtian might ſafely eat of ſuch Things as were offered unto Idols, as to his own Particular, yet, if thereby he knowingly led others to do the ſame Thing ſinfully, he wounded their weak Conſciences, and in ſo doing, ſinned againſt Chriſt. The Sum of this Advice is, then, that a Man had better never eat Fleſh at all on ſuch Occaſions, however lawful in itſelf, than make his Brother offend thereby.

It appears then, that in the Words of my Text, the one God, the Father, is not oppoſed to, or contradiſtinguiſhed from the other divine Perſons in the Trinity, any more than the one Lord Jeſus Chriſt is, but only to falſe Objects of religious Worſhip, to the Gods many and Lords many, whoſe Images were ſet up in Temples, and addreſſed

dreſſed to by Prayers and Sacrifices all the *Heathen* World over. In Oppoſition to theſe Nothings, as they are called in the Old Teſtament, St. *Paul* declares what is the Object of Chriſtian Worſhip, the Father, eminently ſtiled God, and one only in Nature and Subſtance, not many, like the Pagan Deities; and Jeſus Chriſt, the one Lord, not many Lords, like the *Baalim*, among the *Zidonian* and *Syrian* Idolaters. In a Word, St. *Paul*'s Argument to prove, that an intelligent Chriſtian partaking of Meat offered unto Idols, carried no religious Meaning along with it, is this; that ſuch a one never directed Worſhip, nor any Act of Religion towards any Object, that was not ſtrictly and properly God or Lord; whereas, he reputes the Gods and Lords of the *Heathen*, to have neither Divinity nor Dominion, nor ſo much as conſcious Being. But of what Uſe in ſuch an Argument, could the Contradiſtinction between God the Father and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, contended for by our *Arian* Adverſaries, poſſibly prove: There certainly was no Oppoſition intended by the Apoſtle, between

the Gods many and the Lords many among the *Heathen:* Thoſe were both equally Objects of falſe Worſhip, tho' under different Denominations. Why, then, ſhould it be apprehended, that in his Deſcription of the true or Chriſtian Worſhip, the one true God ſhould be underſtood excluſive of the one true Lord.

But notwithſtanding all this, the Men we have to do with rigidly adhere to the Letter of the Text, which they ſay affirms, that the Father is the one, *i. e.* the only God of the Chriſtians. In Conſequence of which, they would perſuade us, that if the Son be God at all, it muſt be in a ſubordinate, or improper Senſe; ſo that he cannot be one with the Father, or equal to him. They have often been told, but without Effect, that this Argument will prove too much, and bring them under inextricable Difficulties: For if the excluſive Term one God, when predicated of the Father, muſt be expounded in the utmoſt Degree of Strictneſs, it will follow, that one Lord alſo, immediately after applied to Jeſus Chriſt,

Chriſt, muſt have the ſelf-ſame rigorous Explication. The Conſequence of which will be this, that as St. *Paul* excludes Jeſus Chriſt from being properly God, ſo he excludes the Father from being properly the Lord of Chriſtians. But is ſuch a Notion rational, ſcriptural, or pious? Is it not rather abſurd and blaſphemous? Muſt not the *Arians* themſelves be compelled therefore to explain the one Lord with ſome Degree of Latitude, ſo as not to make St. *Paul* exclude the Father from being, to us Chriſtians, the Lord as well as Jeſus Chriſt. It is therefore incumbent upon them to deviſe ſome Expedient or Salvo in this Caſe; and yet it will be impoſſible for them to find ſuch a one as will effectually ſerve their Turn, and not at the ſame Time prove, that the Apoſtle no more intended to exclude Jeſus Chriſt from being God, than God the Father from being Lord. But one Rule of Interpretation can be admitted, and the excluſive Phraſe muſt be ſoftened in both Caſes, or in neither. The *Arians*, of all others, are moſt concerned to aſſert the Father's Title to Lordſhip or

Dominion, becauſe ſome of their moſt conſiderable Writers have affirmed, that God denotes Dominion only, and not Subſtance or Nature. If therefore Jeſus Chriſt be the one Lord, excluſive of the Father, upon the Strength of their Maxim he muſt, excluſively alſo of him, be the one God. If ever, then, they ſhould ſeriouſly enter upon the Defence of the Father's being Lord, or undertake to ſhew the Neceſſity of underſtanding St. *Paul* in a qualified Senſe, when he declares Jeſus Chriſt to be the One, or only Lord, they would doubtleſs do it by ſhewing from many Inſtances, that otherwiſe Scripture could not be made conſiſtent with itſelf. They would particularly obſerve, that Jeſus Chriſt induſtriouſly, and on all Occaſions, avoided the Imputation of being independent of the Father, referring on the other Hand every Thing up to him, as the Original of all Power and Perfection. For nothing can give any divine Perſon a ſurer Right to Lordſhip and Authority than Creation. But the Creation of all Things, tho' aſcribed by St. *Paul* to the Son, is more frequently,

as well as more eminently, attributed by him to the Father: Nay, in the very Words of the Text, it is made the diſtinguiſhing Attribute of the Father, *that of him are all Things:* Shall the Potter then have Power over his own Clay, and ſhall not the Sovereign Maker of the Univerſe be Lord of his own Creation? And from hence they would be led to argue, that the Apoſtle, in my Text, when he declares Jeſus Chriſt to be the one Lord, meant it not in Oppoſition to, or excluſive of the Father, but of the Lords many, whom the *Heathen* worſhipped under bodily Figures, ſuch as *Baal Peor*, *Baal Berith*, and *Baalzebub*. And doubtleſs in ſuch a Caſe, they would be thought by Orthodox Chriſtians, as well as by their own Friends, to argue right. But then we, in our Turns, ſhould have the Benefit of Reaſoning in like Manner, and ſhewing that St. *Paul*, when he ſays, *that to us there is one God*, the Father, had no Deſign to exclude Jeſus Chriſt from real and eſſential Divinity; becauſe, in ſo doing, he would contradict not only the other inſpired Writers of the New Teſta-

ment, but himſelf alſo. For nothing higher, nothing more ſtrongly declarative of ſtrict and natural Godhead could be affirmed of the Father, than that *He is over all, God bleſſed for ever.* And this the Apoſtle of my Text declares undoubtedly of Chriſt, *Rom.* ix. 5. The *Arians* indeed have, by various Methods, endeavoured to wreſt this glorious Teſtimony of Chriſt's Divinity from us; but they have all been attended with palpable Defects: Their Conſtructions of the Paſſage have not only been forced, but ungrammatical: Their critical Emendation has nothing to ſupport it, but is againſt all Rules of good Writing, and ſcarce agreeable to common Senſe. As long therefore as ſober Interpretation ſhall continue in Uſe, and the plain Rudiments of the *Greek* be known, ſo long will the Authority of St. *Paul*, for Chriſt's *being over all, God bleſſed for ever*, bar *Arianiſm* from being the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity. So long alſo will this Paſſage be an Argument, that the ſame Apoſtle could not poſſibly intend to exclude Jeſus Chriſt from being with the Father

ther the one God. That the Father and the Son are contradiſtinguiſhed from each other by different and perſonal Characters in the Text, we allow; but ſtill inſiſt upon it, that as the Father's eſſential Title to be our Lord is not precluded, by the Apoſtle's calling the Son the only Lord; ſo the Son's Claim to be the God of the Chriſtians, is not precluded by the Stile of the Father, when he is declared to be the one God. And as the Character of the one Lord and the only Lord, when uſed as diſtinctive of the Son, does not imply that he is Lord in a higher Degree than the Father; ſo, on the other Hand, the ſeemingly excluſive Title of one God and only true God, given to the Father, does by no Means imply, that he is God in a ſuperior Senſe to the Son. The whole Myſtery of theſe Expreſſions is no more than this, that the Son, probably as being our Lord by a double Title, that of Creation, in which he is joint with the Father, and another peculiar to himſelf, the Right ariſing from Redemption, is therefore generally and emphatically ſtiled the Lord in

the New Teſtament, when he is perſonally mentioned. The Father likewiſe being the Head and Fountain of the Deity, and the only one of the three divine Perſons who is ſelf-exiſtent and underived, being alſo the firſt in Order, as well as in our Conceptions, in the Scale of the Trinity, is therefore emphatically denoted by the Name of the one God, and the only true God. But eſſentially conſidered, the whole ſacred Triad are one God, and the only true God, they are equally to us one and the only Lord. In this Reſpect, none of the three Perſons are greater or leſs than the other, but the Whole are equal in Power, Majeſty, and every other divine Perfection. By this Account the Analogy of Scripture is preſerved, and all Confuſion and Inconſiſtency is prevented: Whereas, if, with the *Arians*, we underſtand the excluſive Phraſes rigorouſly, the ſacred Oracles become utterly irreconcileable. St. *Paul*, according to their Scheme, makes the Father, eſſentially conſidered, the one God; and yet elſewhere, in the ſame Reſpect, proclaims Chriſt to be ſupreme God.

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St. *John*, in his Goſpel, introduces our Lord ſpeaking to his Father, as the only true God; and yet the ſame St. *John*, in the End of his firſt Epiſtle, ſcruples not to call Jeſus Chriſt ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς, the true God. To ſalve and reconcile theſe ſeeming Repugnancies, the Orthodox have Recourſe to no other Diſtinction than what the Scriptures ſupply them with, which plainly ſpeak of the Father ſometimes in his perſonal, and at other Times in his eſſential Character: Whereas our Adverſaries introduce a Diſtinction, not only unknown to Scripture, but contrary to the entire Tenour of it, *i. e.* of a ſupreme and ſubordinate Deity. A Diſtinction ſo unlikely to reconcile the ſeeming Diſagreements in the ſacred Writings, that it deſtroys and ſubverts the ruling Principle, which animates and runs entirely thro' that venerable Book, *The Unity of the Godhead.* Deity divided into ſupreme and ſubordinate, was the great and leading Error of *Paganiſm.* To ſuppoſe, therefore, that the Chriſtian Revelation, while it ſteadily avows a Principle direct contrary to this, ſhould yet be expreſſed

expreſſed in ſuch a Manner, as not to be made conſiſtent without admitting Polytheiſm, is a Conceit too extravagant to be ſeriouſly admitted or defended. The *Arians* appear to be more ſenſible of the Weight of this Charge, than able to remove it. For to ſet up more Objects of Worſhip, however it be diverſified, than one, is the moſt criminal Part of Polytheiſm. Barely to believe more Gods than one, is an Error in Speculation; but to make any Being, beſides the one God, a Sharer in our religious Services, is to rob him of the Honour which he has taught us is due to himſelf only. And to inculcate this Leſſon to us, he has taken Care to inform us, as well that there is but one Object of Worſhip, as that there is but one God; *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* To ſerve therefore any other Being in a religious Senſe, call it mediatorial Worſhip, or by any other Name, it matters not, is contrary to the Command of God. To ſet up two diſtinct Objects of Worſhip, is to ſet up two Gods, is to have another God beſides the true one. Indeed, our pre-

preſent Adverſaries do this expreſly, as well as by Conſequence. The plain Teſtimonies of Scripture compel them to admit that Chriſt is God, and as they will not allow him to be the one or ſupreme God with the Father, nor to be entitled to the ſame Kind and Degree of Worſhip, they plainly maintain two Gods, both in Theory and Practice. The Diſtinction of the Son's being God in a ſubordinate Senſe, by which they hope to evade the Charge of contradicting that Fundamental of revealed Religion, the Unity of the Godhead, as if thereby was meant ſupreme Godhead only, is vain and irrational: For it does not appear, that the idolatrous Nations, againſt whoſe Practices God guarded his Church by ſo many ſtrong Declarations of the divine Unity, did hold a Plurality of ſupreme Gods, but rather, on the contrary, a Scale of Deities, all ſubaltern to one Supreme. And ſince this was the Caſe, it is againſt common Senſe, as well as Piety, to ſuppoſe that God, in Scripture, ſhould forbid only a Plurality of ſupreme Gods, which was an Error that never had prevailed,

ed, nor was ever likely to prevail. Doubtleſs, therefore, the Scripture Notion of the divine Unity was levelled againſt a Plurality of Gods in general, againſt multiplying Objects of religious Worſhip, and worſhipping the Creature as well as the Creator. The *Arians* therefore, who do all this, after all their Pretences of holding the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, are found utterly unſcriptural.

I muſt, tho' but briefly, before I conclude this Diſcourſe, touch on the different Modes of Expreſſion uſed in my Text, concerning the Father and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Of the former St. *Paul* ſays, ἐξ οὗ πάντα, of whom are all Things; but the latter δι' οὗ πάντα, by whom are all Things. But does this imply any eſſential Difference between theſe two divine Perſons? God forbid: For if it ſhould, the Father muſt eſſentially differ from himſelf, of whom it is ſaid, *Rom.* xi. 36. *That thro' him, as well as of him, are all Things.* Some Difference, however, we are free to allow in the Text, between theſe bleſſed and adora-

ble

ble Perſons, relating to Priority of Order; the Father being the Fountain and underived Origin of all Things, whilſt the Son, tho' joined in the Act of Creation with the Father, not as a bare Inſtrument, but a voluntary Agent, was from all Eternity begotten by him. More than this cannot juſtly be demanded of us; and of this our Adverſaries are welcome to make what Advantage they can. Perſonal Differences or Diſtinctions are neceſſary to diſcriminate the Father from the Son; but whoever attempts to divide their Nature and Eſſence, departs from the Scripture Rule, and pronounces thoſe to be two, whom Jeſus Chriſt himſelf declares are one. Now to theſe two, in divine Unity with the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed as is moſt due, *&c.*

SER-

SERMON VII.

HEB. i. latter Part of the ſecond Verſe.

By whom alſo he made the Worlds.

OF all the Arguments for the Being of a God, which natural Reaſon ſupplies us withall, none is ſo convincing as that which is drawn from the vaſt Extent, the great Variety, the compleat Harmony and Beauty of the viſible World. For to ſuppoſe, that ſuch a Syſtem had no Beginning, no efficient Cauſe at all, is to make a Deity of the Univerſe, by attributing Self-exiſtence to it: It is abſurdly making God to be, inſtead of the Simpleſt of all Beings, an infinite Complication of mixed and diſſimilar Parts. On

the other Hand, to ſay with *Epicurus*, that Chance produced the Material World, large and beautiful as it now is, had ſtill leſs of Reaſon and Probability in it. That Caſualty, which never yet effected any thing comparable to the loweſt Performances of Art, ſhould blunder out the ſtupendous Frame of the Univerſe, was a Conceit altogether wild and romantick. The only Reſult therefore of ſober Inquiry about the Origin of the World, was, that it had a Beginning, and that not owing to Accident, but Deſign. The next Queſtion was, what Kind of intelligent Being that was, which could form ſomething out of nothing, which could not only Project, but perfect ſo vaſt a Fabrick with the greateſt Wiſdom and Symmetry. And the only Reſolution of this muſt be, that this Architect of the World was infinite in Power, Knowledge, and every other Perfection requiſite to carry on and finiſh ſo mighty and glorious a Work. Thus, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, the inviſible Things or Properties of this firſt Cauſe, from the Creation of the World, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood

derſtood by the Things that were made, even his eternal Power and Godhead. We find then, that Creation, upon the Principles of natural Religion, was a Proof of the Deity of him that created. And the very ſame Medium of Proof is made uſe of in the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament. The Divinity of the God of *Iſrael*, in Oppoſition to all Pretenders to that Character, is eſtabliſhed upon this Foundation, that he alone is the Creator of the Univerſe, and of every Part thereof. To this Purpoſe ſpeaks *Hezekiah* in his Prayer to God upon the Receipt of *Rabſhakeh*'s haughty Meſſage: *O Lord God of Iſrael, which dwelleſt between the Cherubim: Thou haſt made Heaven and Earth.* So alſo *David*, *Pſal.* xcvi. 5. *All the Gods of the Nations are Idols, but the Lord made the Heavens.* Again, in the *Pſalm* preceding this: *The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods.* After which follows, as a Reaſon of this Preference: *The Sea is his, and he made it, and his Hands formed the dry Land.* So likewiſe, *Neh.* ix. 6. *Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou haſt made*

Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens with all their Hoſt, the Earth and all Things that are therein, the Seas and all that is therein. To this Effect alſo God himſelf argues in the Prophets in Defence of his own divine Unity. *I am the Lord, and there is none elſe. I form the Light, and create Darkneſs.* Iſaiah xlv. 5, 6. Again, *Jer.* x. 11, 12. *Thus ſhall ye ſay unto them: The Gods that have not made the Heavens and the Earth, even they ſhall periſh from the Earth, and from under theſe Heavens. He hath made the Earth by his Power, he hath eſtabliſhed the World by his Wiſdom, and hath ſtretched out the Heavens by his Diſcretion.* If we deſcend lower to the Writings of the New Teſtament, we find this Maxim ſtill preſerved and inſiſted on. There alſo Creation is the Characteriſtick of Divinity. Thus, *Rom.* i. 25. of the Creator St. *Paul* pronounces, that He *is bleſſed for ever. Amen, i. e.* He is God: For to none other does that Apoſtle ever give this Doxology. But in his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, *Chap.* iii. *ver.* 4. he more directly lays it down as an Axiom. *He that built all Things is God.*

Since

Since then it is the Dictate of Reaſon, and the Voice of God, throughout his revealed Will, that the Creator of all Things is God, ſhould it not ſeem demonſtrably evident, that whoever is dignified with that auguſt Title in the New Teſtament, is truly and properly God? But this is the Style of the Son in very many Paſſages thereof. *All Things*, ſays St. *John*, in the Beginning of his Goſpel, *were made by him, and without him was not any Thing made that was made.* What Words can be more general or ſtrong than theſe? None ſure, unleſs we ſhall except the famous Teſtimony of St. *Paul*, *Col.* i. 15, 16, 17. *For by him* (*i. e.* Chriſt) *were all Things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, viſible and inviſible, whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers, all Things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all Things, and by him all things conſiſt.* Here the whole Univerſe, in all its diſtinct Regions, is declared to be the Creature of the Son. Nothing was produced without his Agency, be it viſible or inviſible, human or angeli-

cal: But he is pronounced both the final and efficient Cauſe of them all. Nor does the Apoſtle ſtop here: But beſides Creation, to him he aſcribes the Preſervation of all Things. And to prove that this was likewiſe the occult Doctrine of the Old Teſtament, the ſame St. *Paul* applies the following Paſſage out of the 102d *Pſalm*, as ſpoken of the Son. *Thou, Lord, in the Beginning haſt laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Works of thine Hands: They ſhall periſh, but thou remaineſt: And they all ſhall wax old, as doth a Garment, and as a Veſture ſhalt thou fold up, and they ſhall be changed: But thou art the ſame, and thy Years ſhall not fail.* Here, in as plain Words as human Language can afford, the Creation of the Earth and the Heavens are aſcribed unto *Jehovah*, or the true God; and we have the Word of an inſpired Writer, that the Almighty Creator, addreſſed to in this Paſſage, was the Son. Various have been the Attempts of Miſbelievers, to elude the Force of this illuſtrious Teſtimony. One while theſe Words, with the two foregoing

ing Verſes, have been pronounced an Interpolation, tho' they are wanting in no one MS. found in every Verſion, and owned by the moſt ancient Commentators. Another Time we are bore down that theſe Words, in the 102d *Pſalm*, are ſpoken of the Father, and applied to Chriſt by the Author to the *Hebrews*, not ſo much in the Way of Argument, as of Accommodation. Which is ſerving the *Arian* Hypotheſis at the Expence of St. *Paul*'s Character. For the Subject he is upon required Argument, and not Flouriſh, being a profeſſed Eſſay to prove the Son's Superiority to Angels from the Things reſpectively ſaid of each in the Old Teſtament. In order to this a Compariſon is drawn at full Length between the Characters of the one and the other, and every Appearance of ſtrict and ſober Inquiry into the Merits on both Sides, appears to be preſerved. But the Scheme of Accommodation ſpoils all this ſeeming Equity: It repreſents St. *Paul* as groſly partial in Favour of the Son, and applying ſublime Characters to him out of the Old Teſtament, which really belonged to another. Accommodation of

Language, in ſome Ways of Writing, is not only allowable, but beautiful: But Accommodation of Characters, that are foreign to the Subject concerned, is both unfair and trifling. A third and a more conſiſtent Method uſed by the Enemies of our Lord's Divinity, to diſcard this and other Teſtimonies from the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* to our Lord's Divinity, is utterly to reject it as uncanonical, written neither by St. *Paul*, nor by any other inſpired Author. For to allow either of theſe, and at the ſame time repreſent the Reaſonings of the Book weak or fallacious, is giving up the main Point to Infidels, and ſupporting *Arianiſm* to the Ruin of Chriſtianity. But the Genuineneſs, as well as the inſpired Authority of this Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, has been clearly and abundantly made out, and we are not without Hopes, that the ſucceſsleſs Attempts of Miſbelievers, by ſuch dangerous Expedients to make good their Cauſe, will in Time convince them that they cannot be conſiſtent Chriſtians, without being, at the ſame Time, Orthodox Ones.

Since

Since then, Creation, upon the Foot both of natural and revealed Religion, is the ſtanding Proof of the Divinity of that Being who creates; and ſince the Creation of all Things, as well as the Preſervation of them, is, in the Scriptures of the New Teſtament, both frequently and abſolutely aſcribed to the Son, what ſhould hinder the apparent Conſequence from theſe Premiſes, that the Son is naturally and truly God? If he was the firſt Cauſe of the Univerſe, muſt he not be infinite in Power and Wiſdom, and can he be both theſe, and yet a Creature? If he that formed the Light, and created Darkneſs, be the Lord, and none but he can pretend to that Title, ſhall the Son be allowed the Glory of Creation, and yet be excluded from ſharing in the divine Unity? Is the Father, as Creator, and in Oppoſition to the Creature, *bleſſed for ever, Amen, i. e.* God? And ſhall the Son, who is Creator likewiſe, not be God, but only an exalted and deified Creature? *Laſtly*, Shall we readily ſubſcribe to St. *Paul*'s Maxim, *He that built*

things is God; and allowing that the Son built all things, yet deny his proper and eſſential Deity?

To all this the *Arians* reply, that the Son is not ſtrictly and properly the Creator of all things, and conſequently on that Account cannot be ſtrictly and properly God. This Aſſertion they pretend to ſupport chiefly from the Paſſage of my Text, and another Parallel one out of the Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*. In the former of theſe it is ſaid, *that God by his Son made the Worlds*. In the latter, *that God created all things by Jeſus Chriſt*. From theſe Scriptures our Adverſaries infer, that God, or the Father alone, is properly Creator, and that the Son was only miniſterial in the great Work of Building all Things.

Now if by being miniſterial, they mean that the Son created all things, juſt as ordinary Prophets and Apoſtles worked Miracles, not by any Power or Efficiency of his own, but by a Commiſſion which was made good entirely by his Father's Agency; then

then indeed, if this could be made appear, it would certainly follow, that the Son was not properly Creator, and, on that Score, having no Claim to joint Creatorſhip with the Father, could have no Pretenſions to joint Divinity with him. But this can never be made out from the Texts above-mentioned, and is directly contrary to the plain Language of other Scriptures. Every Word denoting ſtrict and proper Efficiency, is employed by the ſacred Writers when they aſcribe the Act of Creation to the Son: Particularly the Words of the 102d *Pſalm*, applied to the Son by the Author to the *Hebrews*, acknowledge that he *laid the Foundation of the Earth, and* that *the Heavens are the Work of* his *Hands*. Who could rationally infer leſs from hence, than that the Son created theſe things by a Power inherent in himſelf; eſpecially conſidering, that the Words are made uſe of to prove the Superiority of the Son to the Angels. For an Angel was naturally as capable as any other Being of executing that Part in the Creation, which the Son performed, if he did nothing therein by

his own Power, but ſpake the Word only, and the reſt was effected entirely by the Father's Omnipotence. Beſides, had this been the utmoſt Meaning of thoſe ſtrong Words of the *Pſalmiſt*, ſo far from the obvious Senſe of them, is it credible, that the Apoſtle ſhould inſert no explanatory Clauſe to ſave the Father's Claim to proper Creatorſhip, excluſive of all others; but leave us to conclude the thing from the Uſe of a Prepoſition of doubtful and equivocal Meaning ſix Verſes higher? St. *Peter* and St. *John* behaved very differently on an Occaſion of leſs Importance: For in the ſecond Chapter of *Acts*, after they had healed the lame Man, tho' they had not aſſumed, even in Appearance, the Efficiency of the Cure to themſelves, but commanded him to riſe and walk, avowedly and expreſly in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt of *Nazareth*; yet when they apprehended, only from the earneſt Manner in which the People looked upon them, that they might ſurmiſe as if this Cure had been wrought by their own Power, they openly and abſolutely diſclaim the thing, denying, that by their own

own Power they made the Man to walk, and referring the miraculous Cure to Faith in the Name of Chriſt. If then, in Reality, the Son had no more created the World, than the Apoſtles above-mentioned cured the lame Man, by his own Power, can we conceive, that St. *Paul* would not plainly have told us ſo, as they did? Can we imagine, on the other Hand, that he would have uſed ſuch Expreſſions, as muſt naturally lead us into the contrary Perſuaſion, without explaining himſelf, or guarding againſt Miſapprehenſion? By no Means. A late Writer gives it us as the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, that the Son created the World by the Power of the Father. But if he meant that the Son's own Power was not employed therein, we may fairly challenge him, or any one elſe, to prove that Point from Scripture. No ſuch thing is therein affirmed expreſly, or deducible from thence by any neceſſary Conſequence. The Father, according to Scripture, made the World: The ſame is ſaid of the Son: And when their joint Concern in that great Work is ſpoken of, God, or the

Father

Father, is ſaid to have made the World by the Son; but from the latter ſaying it does not follow, that the Son did not create the World by his own Power. The only neceſſary Corollary from thence is, that both the divine Perſons concurred in the Creation; the Father was more eminently, but the Son nevertheleſs was really and ſtrictly the Creator of the World.

I need ſpend no more time in proving the Son to be the efficient Cauſe of all Things, becauſe it does not certainly appear, that the *Arians* deny it. But if it be once admitted, that the Son created the World by his own proper Efficiency, his infinite Power and Wiſdom therein employed, is alſo admitted, and in Conſequence of that his Divinity will be undeniable. For could a Creature poſſibly arrive at thoſe Perfections, to uſe the ſublime Language of *Job* on this Occaſion; could a Creature, however dignified or advanced, Meaſure the Waters in the Hollow of his Hands? Could ſuch a one meet out the Heavens with a Span? Could he comprehend the Duſt of the Earth in a Meaſure? Could

Could he weigh the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Ballance? In vain is the Declaration of the *Pſalmiſt*, *That the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his Handywork*, if thoſe wonderful Phenomena might be produced by a Power ſhort of infinite and divine. In vain alſo is the Reaſoning of the Apoſtle St. *Paul* to the *Romans*, *That the inviſible Things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead*; if the Son who created the Univerſe be himſelf a Creature, neither eternal, nor eſſentially divine. *Laſtly*, Every Argument above-mentioned in the Old Teſtament, by which the inſpired Men, and even God himſelf aſſerts the divine Exiſtence and Unity from the Work of Creation, is faulty and inconcluſive, if the Son, who created all things, be not both truly God, and one in Subſtance and Perfections with the Father.

Againſt all theſe ſhocking Conſequences the *Arians* ſtand out upon the Strength of a ſingle

a ſingle *Greek* Particle διὰ in my Text, and the parallel Place to it. Neither the plain Paſſages of Scripture, which abſolutely aſcribe the Creation of the World to the Son, nor the concurrent Teſtimony of all Antiquity to the ſame Point, can prevail with them to allow that he was properly Creator, becauſe it is twice ſaid in the New Teſtament, that God made or created by him. They cannot deny that the Particle διὰ denotes Efficiency, becauſe in two Paſſages all things are ſaid to be διὰ by the Father. And would they but admit that the Father made all things by the Efficiency of the Son, we ſhould have no farther Controverſy with them on this Head. Let them ſay, that the Son made the World at the Command of the Father, provided they allow him to have a creative Power properly his own, it will ſerve all the Purpoſes of the Catholick Doctrine, becauſe ſuch Power muſt be inſeparable from true and proper Divinity. And ſure it is but decent to conclude from the Father's laying his Commands upon his Son to create, that he knew he was equal to the Work.

But

Bnt if laying aſide the Reaſon of the thing, the Analogy of Scripture and Primitive Tradition, our Adverſaries will have recourſe to Criticiſm only, and becauſe the Particle διὰ ſometimes ſtands before a Cauſe merely miniſterial and inſtrumental, which ſerves their preſent Occaſions, therefore inſiſt on that Senſe here; to let them ſee that Criticiſm is a Weapon with two Edges, and how little their Cauſe will gain by the Uſe of it, it may not be improper to put them in Mind, that among other Significations of διὰ, with a *Genitive* Caſe in the *Greek* Scriptures, we ought to reckon that of Society or Fellowſhip. I will give a few Inſtances of this out of many that might be aſſigned. St. *Paul*, *Gal.* iv. having explained how we receive the Adoption of Sons by God's ſending forth his Son to redeem us, argues thus, in the 7th *ver. Wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son; and if a Son, then an Heir of God* διὰ Χριστοῦ, *together with Chriſt.* That thus it ought to be rendered, and *not by Chriſt*, as in our *Engliſh* Bible, will ap-

pear evident, if we compare this with the parallel Reaſoning of the ſame Apoſtle, *Chap.* viii. to the *Romans*, where having in like Manner proved, that Chriſtians are the Sons of God by receiving the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry, *Abba Father.* He adds, in the 17th *ver. And if Sons, then Heirs of God,* συγκληρονόμοι δὲ Χριστῦ, *and joint Heirs with Chriſt.* Again, *Heb.* ix. 12. ſpeaking of Chriſt entering into Heaven to perform there the Office of an High Prieſt for us, the Apoſtle ſays, Οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων ἀλλὰ δι' ἰδίου αἵματος εἰσῆλθεν. *Neither with the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood he entered into the holy Place.* The Prieſthood of Chriſt is here preferred to that of the Law on this Account, that whereas the *Jewiſh* High Prieſt went Yearly into the Holy of Holies, taking with him the Blood of Goats and of Calves, Chriſt entered into the heavenly Sanctuary with no other Offering than that of his own Blood, *i. e.* the Merits thereof, to obtain eternal Redemption for us. Once more St. *Paul*, in his ſecond Epiſtle to *Timothy*, *Chap.* ii. *ver.* 2. thus exhorts

exhorts him: *The things that thou haſt heard of me*, διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων, *together with many Witneſſes*, *i. e.* and from other Apoſtles, *the ſame commit thou to faithful Men*, &c. Since therefore the Prepoſition, which is commonly rendered *by*, may and does alſo ſignify *together with*, ſuppoſe we ſhould inſiſt on that Signification in the Paſſage under Conſideration, and inſtead of the Rendering in the Text, *by whom alſo he*, *i. e.* God *made the Worlds*, ſhould tranſlate, *Together with whom alſo he made the Worlds:* And whereas we now read in our Bibles, that *God created all things by Jeſus Chriſt*, we ſhould ſay it ought to be rendered, *God created all things together with Chriſt Jeſus:* How full and deciſive would this be for the Orthodox Notion of the Father and Son's being jointly Creator of the Univerſe?

I do not mention this, as if it was really the Apoſtle's Senſe, but only to ſhew, that our Adverſaries would not benefit themſelves by appealing from Scripture, explained by Catholick Tradition, to the Bar

of Criticiſm. Sufficient it is for us, that the obvious Rendering of Scripture, and the Senſe of thoſe who lived neareſt to the New Teſtament Times, ſupport our Belief that as the Son jointly with the Father, including alſo the Holy Ghoſt, is Creator of all things, ſo are they jointly the one God. To whom, *&c.*

SER-

SERMON VIII.

ACTS v. 3, 4.

But Peter *said*, Ananias, *why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lye to the Holy Ghoſt, and to keep back Part of the Price of the Land? Whilſt it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was ſold, was it not in thine own Power? Why haſt thou conceived this Thing in thine Heart? Thou haſt not lied unto Men, but unto God.*

HAVING, in the former Diſcourſes, vindicated the real and eſſential Divinity of the ſecond Perſon in the ever bleſſed Trinity, I propoſe to conclude

this Courſe of Lectures, with vindicating alſo the Deity of the Holy Ghoſt, againſt the ſame Adverſaries, the *Arian* Oppoſers of the Catholick Doctrine, concerning a Trinity in Unity.

The Paſſages of Holy Writ, from which the Church has, in all Ages, deduced the Belief of the Holy Ghoſt's Divinity, and on Account of which ſhe has paid him joint Worſhip with the Father and the Son, are almoſt innumerable. There is ſcarce a ſingle Act or Attribute ſpoken of in the inſpired Writings, as peculiar to the ſupreme Being, but what, ſome where or other in the ſame Books, is aſcribed to the bleſſed Spirit. He is not indeed expreſly called God in Scripture, as the Father and the Son frequently are; but by Conſequence and neceſſary Deduction, even this incommunicable Name appears ſometimes to be given to the Holy Ghoſt in the Word of God: But no where ſo plainly, and at one View, is this to be ſeen, as in my Text: For in the firſt Verſe, the Crime of *Ananias*, who fraudulently retained Part of the Price

Price of his Land, while he pretended to have laid the whole at the Apoſtle's Feet, is called by St. *Peter*, *lying to the Holy Ghoſt*; and in the ſecond Verſe of the Text, the Apoſtle calls the ſelf-ſame Crime, *lying unto God*, without mentioning the Holy Ghoſt. If therefore we are not under a Neceſſity of concluding from hence, that St. *Peter*, in Effect, gives to the Holy Ghoſt the Appellation of God, no conſequential Proof from Scripture ought ever to be admitted. Which yet to ſay, would be to impeach a Method uſed by our Lord himſelf, who, more than once, in this very Way of Deduction, argues from the Books of the Old Teſtament.

But however plain and cogent this Proof of the Holy Ghoſt's being virtually called God by the Apoſtle in my Text may ſeem, it has been treated with great Contempt, as deſerving very little Conſideration from the *Arian* Quarter. Whether it be, that Prejudice has hindered the Effect of this very clear Argument, or whether an Air of Scorn has been affected on this Occa-

ſion, for want of a grave and pertinent Reply; ſo it is, that, without being vouchſafed a direct Anſwer, we have been ſent for Satisfaction to another Paſſage in the *Acts*, *viz.* to the 23d *Chap. ver.* 9. where, upon a Diſſention between the *Phariſees* and the *Sadducees* concerning *Paul*'s Defence, the *Scribes*, who ſided with the former, ſay, *We find no Evil in this Man; but if a Spirit or an Angel hath ſpoken to him, let us not fight againſt God.* We are told then, that if ever any Set of Men had, or ſhould, ſet up the Divinity of Spirits and Angels as an Article of Faith, this latter Paſſage in the *Acts* would be juſt ſuch another Proof for them, that Spirits and Angels are by Scripture Conſequence called God, as my Text is for us, that the Holy Ghoſt by the like Method is ſo called. The Application is left to ourſelves, *viz.* that as the former is no Proof at all, ſo neither is the latter. They would hereby inſinuate, that, as in the former Caſe, the *Scribes*, when they call oppoſing a Doctrine received from a Spirit or an Angel fighting againſt God, did not virtually call either

of

of thoſe Beings God, but only intimate, that Doctrines ſo received, muſt come originally from God, and ſo cannot be gainſaid, without ultimately reſiſting or fighting againſt him: So St. *Peter* in the Text, when he makes lying to the Holy Ghoſt the ſame as lying unto God, did not intend to ſuggeſt, that theſe were one and the ſame Being, but only that the Holy Ghoſt being God's Repreſentative in the Government of his Church, whatever Fraud or Indignity was put upon his Vicegerent, in the End affected or terminated in God, whoſe Vicegerent the Holy Ghoſt was.

But 'tis really wonderful, that ever it ſhould be in the Power of Prejudice itſelf, to keep Men of Senſe and Learning from ſeeing how great a Diſparity there is between theſe two Caſes.

For, *firſt*, the former was the Saying of the *Scribes*, who were unconverted *Jews*, and therefore could never be uſed to eſtabliſh any Article of Chriſtian Faith: At moſt it could only ſerve to ſhew the Belief

of the Learned in the *Jewiſh* Church of our Saviour's Time: Whereas, the latter was the Speech of an inſpired Apoſtle, and, as ſuch, carries with it the higheſt Authority for deciding diſputed Chriſtian Doctrines.

Secondly, Admitting the Speakers in the two Caſes to be of equal Weight conſidered in themſelves, the former of the Sayings is ſhort and elliptical, and thereby the Intention of the Speaker becomes dubious, and liable to great Variety of poſſible Conſtructions: Whereas, what St. *Peter* ſays to *Ananias* is moſtly full and clear, as well as emphatical, and conſequently may more eaſily be reduced to a determinate Senſe.

Thirdly, When the *Scribes* ſay of St. *Paul*, *If a Spirit or an Angel hath ſpoken to him, let us not fight againſt God*; the Words neither neceſſarily nor probably imply, that to oppoſe him, was directly to fight againſt God, but only conſtructively. They certainly may mean no more, than that

that as Angels and good Spirits deliver no Meſſages but from God; ſo to contradict Doctrines thus delivered, is to ſet ourſelves againſt God, from whom they originally come. And that this was all the *Scribes* intended is next to certain, becauſe the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, which was their Rule of Faith, taught them to make a wide Difference between Angels or Spirits, and the God of *Iſrael*. Their own *Moſes* told them, *Deut.* vi. 4. that *the Lord their God was one Lord:* Whereas, from the Pſalmiſt they learnt, that *there were thouſands of Angels.* Nor do we ever find in the Sects or Hereſies among the *Jews*, any that were abſurd enough to believe, that Angels or Spirits were God. And ſhould any ſuch Heterodoxy as this hereafter ariſe, the Advocates for it could poſſibly have no Relief or Benefit from the Saying of the *Scribes* before us; becauſe, to ſuppoſe that they there call a Spirit or an Angel God, would be to ſuppoſe a learned Body of Men (for ſuch the *Scribes* were) contradicting, in the openeſt Manner, their own avowed Principles, and furniſhing

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the *Sadducees*, their Adverſaries, in the very Inſtant of their Debate with them, with an undeniable Charge of Blaſphemy and Self-contradiction. But can any Thing like this be urged againſt the Conſtruction put by us on St. *Peter*'s Words in my Text? If when he makes lying to the Holy Ghoſt to be lying unto God, we ſuppoſe that he does it directly, is there Room for ſaying as in the other Caſe, that he would thereby offer manifeſt Violence to his own Principles or religious Belief? Is it as evident, upon the Footing of Chriſtianity, that the Holy Ghoſt is a Creature, as it was on the Baſis of Judaiſm, that Spirits and Angels were ſuch? No one can or will affirm it. There is not the leaſt Intimation of any ſuch Thing in the New Teſtament: But, on the contrary, ſo many magnificent Things are ſaid of the Holy Ghoſt, and ſo many Wonderful Operations are aſcribed to him, that no Character, ſhort of Divinity, can poſſibly ſuit him. His Power, both over the natural and moral World, is celebrated and declared in frequent and in plain Terms. To him the working of Miracles is imputed

ted, not only as that Gift was exercised by the Apostles, but also by Christ himself, who vouchsafed to own, *that by the Spirit of God he cast out Devils*, *Mat.* xii. 28. And this Spirit of God, in the parallel Place of St. *Luke*'s Gospel, is called *the Finger of God*. Nor less extraordinary were the Powers exerted by the Holy Ghost over the Minds of Men. His sanctifying Graces, whereby, without offering Violence to the Freedom of the human Will, he leads Men to will, and to do of his good Pleasure, seem to require a Donor, that is of infinite Power and Wisdom. Compared with these, Miracles in the natural World, however wonderful they may be, when considered alone, lose much of the Marvellous. We find but little Difficulty in conceiving, that passive and inanimate Matter should yield to any Directions, that come from its Almighty Creator; nor that even intelligent Beings should, by the same irresistible Means, be compelled to an involuntary Obedience; but the Methods whereby the blessed Spirit orders the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men,

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ſo as to make them willingly good and holy againſt the Bent of depraved Nature, are the greateſt of all Miracles and Myſteries, and loudly proclaim him to be wiſe and powerful beyond all Expreſſion. From the ſanctifying Graces beſtowed by the Holy Ghoſt, let us turn our Eyes to his ſpiritual Gifts, and therein alſo we ſhall ſee the ſame plain Traces of Divinity. Prophecy, in the Old Teſtament, is ſtill ſaid to be the Word of the Lord, and to ſhew that it came not in old Time by the Will of Man, the inſpired Meſſengers frequently preface their Errand with, *Thus ſaith the Lord.* But in the New we are informed, that the Holy Ghoſt was that Lord, by whom thoſe Men of God were moved to ſpeak as they did. And accordingly the Style of Prophecy is therein altered from *Thus ſaith the Lord*, to, *Thus ſaith the Holy Ghoſt.* As the Prophetick, ſo the Prieſtly Office under the Law was beſtowed by divine and ſpecial Deſignation, no one taking that Employ, but he that was called thereto by God, as was *Aaron*. Under the Goſpel likewiſe no one preach-

ed, except he was ſent; Men were divinely called to be Apoſtles, and extraordinarily ſeparated unto the Goſpel of God. But it appears from the New Teſtament, that both the *Jewiſh* and the Chriſtian Hierarchy was under the ſpecial Direction of the Holy Ghoſt: For the Knowledge of this, with reſpect to the former, we are indebted to the inſpired Writer to the *Hebrews*, who at once informs us, that the moſt ſolemn Services of the Tabernacle were appointed by the bleſſed Spirit, and what he ſignified, or typically preſignified thereby. As to the Concern of the Holy Ghoſt in the Choice of the firſt Chriſtian Clergy, the New Teſtament is full of it. Thus *Paul* and *Barnabas* were ſeparated unto the Holy Ghoſt by his ſpecial Command, and afterwards ſent forth by him to perform the Office of Evangeliſts. And the Elders of *Epheſus* are, by St. *Paul*, declared to have been made Overſeers of the Flock there, by the Holy Ghoſt; juſt in the ſame authoritative Senſe, as the ſame Apoſtle elſewhere declares of himſelf and his Brethren, that God had made them able

ble Miniſters of the New Teſtament. And no Wonder that the Holy Ghoſt ſhould commiſſion Apoſtles and Evangeliſts for the Work of the Miniſtry, ſince even the great High Prieſt of our Profeſſion himſelf, in his human and ſacerdotal Capacity, was authorized and aſſiſted by the ſame bleſſed Spirit. He deſcended upon him after his Baptiſm, by which glorious Manifeſtation he was inaugurated into the Office of baptizing with the Holy Ghoſt. By the Holy Ghoſt likewiſe was it, that he gave his laſt Commandments unto the Apoſtles whom he had choſen, concerning the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. *Laſtly*, When this our High Prieſt offered himſelf without Spot unto God, whether thereby be meant the Sacrifice of himſelf upon the Croſs, or his ſubſequent Interceſſion for us in Heaven, by Virtue of that All-ſufficient Sacrifice, this great Propitiation is deſcribed, as made thro' the eternal Spirit. Surely, then, he whoſe Energy gave Power and Efficacy to every holy Service of God, and under both Diſpenſations, muſt himſelf be God. Angels and holy Women might

miniſter unto him under temporal Wants and Diſtreſſes; but to conſecrate the Son of God, to add Weight unto his Counſels, Merit and Strength unto his Sufferings and Interceſſions, exceeds the Meaſure of all created Power or infuſed Holineſs. Again, How comes it to paſs, that the Honour of the bleſſed Spirit ſhould be guarded againſt Blaſphemy and Violation in ſo ſtrong a Manner, as our Lord aſſures us it is, if he be no more than a Creature; whilſt all other Sin and Blaſphemy, whether reſpecting the Father or the Son, ſhall have Forgiveneſs, ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt remains unpardonable: Can he then be inferior to either of them? Once more, if the Holy Ghoſt be not truly and properly God, how comes St. *Paul* to mention his having Temples; for ſo he calls the Bodies of Chriſtians, juſt as he elſewhere makes them to be the Temples of God. And leſt we ſhould miſtake his Meaning thereby, to be no more than that thoſe Temples are built or conſecrated by the Holy Ghoſt, and thence to be called his Temples, as that built and conſecrated by *Solomon* might be,

be, and is for that Reaſon called his, the Apoſtle aſſures his *Corinthians*, *not only that their Bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghoſt, but that he is in them*, i. e. he is the Deity which dwells there. Beſides, it is worthy of Obſervation, that the ſacred Penmen, both of the Old and New Teſtament, conſtantly avoid calling the Temple of *Solomon* at large, his Temple, but ſtill ſpeak of it as the Temple, or the Houſe which *Solomon* built; whilſt the Temple of *Dagon*, and the Temple of the Lord, are Expreſſions for a Houſe, erected in Honour of *Dagon*, or of the true God. From hence alſo it follows, that the Holy Ghoſt being the Proprietor of Temples, muſt be entitled to worſhip, that being the ſole End for which Temples are ſet up. Thus, which Way ſoever we view the Argument before us, we ſee plain Proofs of the Spirit's true and proper Divinity. To this I might add, that the Holy Ghoſt, as well as the Father and the Son, is ſpecified in the Form of Baptiſm, appealed to by the Apoſtle St. *Paul* in an Act of Religion, a ſolemn Oath, and addreſſed to jointly with the

the Father and the Son, in ſome Scripture Modes of Benediction. But have Angels all or any of theſe Characteriſticks of Divinity? Wherever therefore they ſeem by Conſequence to be honoured with the Appellation of God, that Conſequence can neither be neceſſary nor probable; whilſt with Regard to the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe Properties, Attributes, and Operations are the very ſame which Scripture aſcribes to God himſelf, wherever, in holy Writ, he is by obvious Conſequence termed God, we may juſtly deem it to be actually ſo intended.

Fourthly, In the Saying of St. *Peter* to *Ananias* in the Text, there are ſome Circumſtances, which make it in a Manner neceſſary to underſtand, that by God, in the ſecond Verſe of the Text, he meant the Holy Ghoſt, mentioned by him in the firſt Verſe, whom therefore by direct Conſequence he calls God.

For, *Firſt*, The Heinouſneſs of *Ananias*'s Crime is mentioned in the ſtrongeſt

Terms, at the Beginning of our Apoſtle's Expoſtulation with him, and while he is only charged with lying to the Holy Ghoſt; which ſurely implies, that the utmoſt of his Guilt conſiſted therein, and that there was no ſuperior Being, againſt whom he had offended by ſo foul a Prevarication.

When the Scripture deſigns to expreſs a full and firm Perſuaſion and Reſolution in Men to commit Wickedneſs, their Hearts are ſaid to be *filled to do Evil, and to be filled with Wickedneſs.* This therefore is a Phraſe, which alone emphatically denotes a ſtrong and rooted Habit of ill Living. But in the Text, the Crime charged on *Ananias* is further exaggerated: For it is not barely ſaid, why haſt thou filled thine Heart, or why is thy Heart filled to lye to the Holy Ghoſt; but *Why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lye to the Holy Ghoſt.* It ſeems from hence, as if the Heart of Man, corrupt and naughty as it ſometimes is, was hardly impure enough of itſelf, and without diabolical Inſtigation, to conceive the Perpetration of ſo horrid a Crime,

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as is that of lying to the Holy Ghoſt. But what Reaſon can be aſſigned for the peculiar Aggravation of this Fault, but that it was committed directly againſt God, the greateſt and beſt of Beings. Certainly, if lying to the Holy Ghoſt, bad as it was, had a ſtill worſe Circumſtance attending it, and lying to God was an Offence more heinous than lying to the Holy Ghoſt, (as it muſt be, if the Holy Ghoſt himſelf was not God) thoſe high Terms of Aggravation, beſtowed by St. *Peter* on *Ananias* for lying to the Holy Ghoſt, would have been reſerved for the worſt Circumſtance of the Fault, his lying to God. Whereas, when he ſpeaks of that, there is not the leaſt Note of any additional Guilt, but the Crime is barely mentioned. How ſhall we account for this, otherwiſe than by the Catholick Interpretation of the Paſſage, and ſaying, that as the Holy Ghoſt was God, lying to him was the utmoſt of *Ananias*'s Fault, the Heinouſneſs of which being ſufficiently noted upon the firſt Mention of it, it was ſufficient afterwards barely to repeat it.

But, *Secondly*, If by lying to God, in the latter Verſe of the Text, St. *Peter* meant any Thing diſtinct from *Ananias*'s lying to the Holy Ghoſt, then, in the ſumming up of his Crime, the Apoſtle has made a defective Gradation; he imperfectly enumerates the Steps, by which he was to arrive at the juſt Deſcription of his Guilt. *Thou haſt not*, ſaith he, *lied unto Men, but unto God.* Now, no one ſuppoſes it to be here denied, that *Ananias* had lied unto Men; becauſe the Fact plainly proves the contrary, which was, that he laid only a certain Part of the Price of his Poſſeſſion at the Apoſtle's Feet, pretending, and probably affirming it to be the Whole. St. *Peter*'s Meaning therefore muſt be, thou haſt not lied unto Men only, but alſo unto God: And if by God in this Place he denoted the Holy Ghoſt, this was the entire Detail of *Ananias*'s Fault. But if by God, he meant a Being differing from, and ſuperior to the Holy Ghoſt, he would certainly have ſaid, Thou haſt not lied unto Men, nor unto the Holy Ghoſt, but unto God: Other-

Otherwiſe, he had left out one main Branch of the Charge, and that, on which he laid the whole Streſs upon his firſt Expoſtulation with him.

Thirdly, If lying to the Holy Ghoſt had been lying unto God conſtructively only, and not directly, as the Holy Ghoſt himſelf is God, how came it to paſs, that St. *Peter*, in his Speech to *Sapphira*, immediately before he inflicted on her the Vengeance of ſudden Death, ſhould content himſelf with calling her's and her Husband's Crime, only an Agreement between them, to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Decency, as well as Juſtice, required, that before Sentence of Death was pronounced upon her, the Flagitiouſneſs of her Fault ſhould be fully ſet forth. And this was done by him upon the Catholick Hypotheſis, that the Spirit of the Lord was truly God. But if the *Arians* are right, who affirm the Holy Ghoſt to be a Creature, to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, was not the worſt of their Fault, and the high Aggravation of it, *viz.* that by tempting the Spirit of

the Lord, they conſtructively tempted the Lord himſelf, was concealed, tho' it was neceſſary to juſtify the Severity of the Sentence which immediately followed, and to deter others from the like Practices.

Thus it appears, from the only plauſible Conſtruction of St. *Peter's* Words in the Text, that he virtually calls the Holy Ghoſt God; it appears likewiſe from other Parts of Scripture, where he has not the Name, that he has the Attributes, and performs ſuch Operations, as are peculiar to the Deity: From which the Church rightly deduces this Conſequence, that the Holy Ghoſt, the third Perſon in the ever-bleſſed Trinity, is, together with the Father and the Son, the one true God.

And now, having finiſhed my Courſe of Lectures in Defence of Chriſt's Divinity and that of the bleſſed Spirit, againſt the Scripture Arguments of Misbelievers, I ſhall only add a few Words concerning the Outcry about Myſteries, and impoſing Teſts of Orthodoxy in theſe Points. As to the firſt,

firſt, the Church makes no Myſteries; but finding ſuch in the Word of God, only preſerves and inculcates them among the other preternatural Truths of revealed Religion. The Governors of it are as tender of the juſt Prerogatives of Reaſon as the reſt of their Species are, and as jealous that no real Violence be done thereto, under any Colour whatever. But they think it no Diſparagement to that noble Faculty, that ſome Truths ſhould be above its Graſp. It is confeſſed, that in ſome Ages of the Church, religious Opinions, which contradict the Evidence of common Senſe, have been advanced into Articles of Faith: But then, this proceeded not from the Love of Paradox and Myſtery in the governing Part of the Church, but from Avarice or Ambition, one or both of which found its Account in every Error of Popery: Whereas, neither of thoſe Motives could be at the Bottom of thoſe Myſteries which our Church has retained. For the Belief of a Co-eſſential and Co-eternal Trinity, has plainly added

nothing to the Emoluments or Immunities of its Clergy, nor been attended with any one lucrative Conſequence, which they might not as well have expected, if the *Unitarian* or *Arian* Scheme had prevailed. We have indeed been told, with as much Aſſurance, as if human Intentions were viſible, that Zeal for Orthodoxy proceeds only from the Love of Dominion, and a Deſire of lording it over the Conſciences of our Brethren: But this is a Cenſure as unjuſt as it is uncharitable; for our own Church innovates in nothing, but in all Points of Faith adheres to the good old Ways of Scripture and early Antiquity. Beſides, Tyrants always affect to be lawleſs in their own Perſons, whilſt they encroach on the Liberties of others; whereas our ſpiritual Governors ſubmit to all they require, and bear every Burden they impoſe: And if this be Tyranny, there can be no ſuch Thing as juſt Government. What remains therefore, but that deſpiſing the Calumnies of fool-

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iſh and unreaſonable Men, we continue ſtedfaſt in that Faith, which teaches us to give to the ever-bleſſed Trinity in Unity, all Honour and Glory, *&c.*

A

SERMON

PREACH'D at the

VISITATION

Of the Right Reverend the

Lord Biſhop of *London*,

IN THE

Cathedral Church of St. *PAUL*,

October 13, 1738.

A

SERMON

PREACH'D at the

VISITATION, &c.

MATTHEW, Chap. x. latter Part of the 16th Verſe.

Be ye therefore Wiſe as Serpents, and Harmleſs as Doves.

THIS Advice, which our Lord gave to his Apoſtles when he firſt ſent them out to preach, will not, I hope, be deemed an improper Subject of Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe before thoſe, who, by Virtue of a Commiſſion originally given out by the ſame great Biſhop of Souls, are appointed to be ſtanding Preachers of the Chriſtian Religion. Sure I am, that the Circumſtances of their Times and ours being duly conſidered and compared, Prudence and Innocence in the Chriſtian Paſtors are, at leaſt, as neceſſary to the Succeſs of Religion now, as they were when the Command of my Text was firſt promulged. It is true, that the Prejudices againſt Chriſtianity, at preſent, are far from being ſo general, or ſo violently purſued, as when the Apoſtles received the Directions in my Text. But then, together with theſe, they had alſo a Power given them over unclean Spirits to caſt them out, and to heal all Manner of Sickneſs, and all Manner of Diſeaſe, *Chap.* x. *ver.* 1. Had therefore the Perſonal Conduct of theſe firſt Preachers been leſs diſcreet and innocent, their wonderful Credentials might alone have ſupported, in ſome Meaſure, the Credit of their Miſſion. Whereas we have no miraculous Certificates of a Call from Heaven: So that the Efficacy

Efficacy of our Miniſtry, under the Grace of God, reſts chiefly on the Prudence and Piety of our Behaviour. Great and evident is the intrinſick Goodneſs of the Chriſtian Syſtem: But ſtill, had it no authorized Supporters, or were thoſe it has generally without Diſcretion and Virtue, the Excellency of the Plan would either be unobſerved and unattended to, or at leaſt to ſuch a Degree, that, in all human Views, it would never generally be acknowledged as the indiſpenſible Rule of Faith and Morality in the World. I ſpeak not this to inform, and much leſs to correct any of this Reverend Audience, which I dare ſay is before-hand with me, both in making, and in acting up to this Obſervation: But there are other, and thoſe very ſignal, Uſes to be made of it. For the Sake of which give me leave briefly to illuſtrate the Neceſſity of the Advice given to all Chriſtian Clergy in my Text; that they be *wiſe as Serpents, and Harmleſs as Doves.*

And, *Firſt*, as to Wiſdom or Prudence, whether we conſider the Difficulties of the

Ministerial Work in itself, or the Prejudices we have to encounter in the Execution of it, it must appear, that Caution and Wariness are peculiarly requisite thereto, and that without these no Man, however otherwise well qualified, can be sufficient for these Things.

Other Professions labour to preserve Men secure in the Possession of favourite Advantages, and therefore have less trouble in procuring all necessary Attention and Deference from those, with whom they are concerned. But it is our Lot to be employed for the Good of an unseen Principle, the Soul, for which Nature gives no Tendernesses; and concerning Dangers, to which Grace supplies them with Apprehensions, which are commonly considered as at a Distance. And what is more, our Method for promoting the Security of this invisible Treasure, sometimes crosses the darling Pursuits of Men after Pleasure and Profit. They that would Profit by our Counsels, are to chain up their Passions; in many Cases to refuse the warmest Solli-

citations of Fleſh and Blood, and to be deaf to the Promptings of Youth and bodily Complexion. They muſt, on ſome Emergencies, be prepared to reſign Wealth and Power, and thoſe Advantages which ſet Men higheſt in the Diſtinctions of Life, if not Life itſelf, in hopes of diſtant and unſeen Reverſions. In this Senſe muſt the Diſciples of Chriſt take up their Croſs: Comparatively ſpeaking they muſt hate many Things to which Nature gives them ſtrong Propenſities, and be anxiouſly fond of a Part, that is inacceſſible to all the Powers of Senſe, and that is diſcoverable chiefly by the Aids of Religion and Philoſophy. Having therefore Meſſages to impart, ſo unwelcome to Mankind in their preſent corrupt State, how great Need have the Embaſſadors of God for Prudence in the Diſcharge of their Commiſſion? And how requiſite is it that, by all honeſt Methods, they ſhould render their Perſons and Characters acceptable to thoſe, whom they would win over to Propoſals of ſo much Self-denial.

Another Circumſtance of our holy Function, which makes Diſcretion and Addreſs more peculiarly deſirable, is this: That we are to make our Way to the Affections, or at leaſt to the good Opinion of Men, under a vaſt Variety of Capacities and Conditions. Had the Wiſe or the Noble alone been called to the Knowledge of God and Religion, a more moderate Degree of Pains and Obſervation would have let us into the Methods which are neceſſary to open the Affections of the Great and the Polite: Or had God literally hid the Myſteries of his Kingdom from the Wiſe and Prudent, and revealed them only unto Babes, we could without much Difficulty have deſcended to their Level. But our preſent Province is to become all things to all Men, that ſo we may ſave ſome out of every Diſtinction. This was the Practice and the Glory of the bleſſed St. *Paul*; who, tho' he was free from all Men, became the Servant of all, that he might gain the more. Thus when it was his Lot to encounter the ignorant *Lycaonians*, he could let himſelf down to

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their Capacities: And yet when the Cauſe of God called him before the awful Court of *Areopagus*, he knew how to raiſe his Expreſſion, and refine his Sentiment, beating down Idolatry, with the Aſſiſtances of that Learning and good Senſe, for which the Judges of that Tribunal were ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed. At another Time, when ſummoned to make his Defence before King *Agrippa* and *Feſtus*, the *Roman* Governor, how ready, and yet how polite are all his Anſwers to thoſe great Perſonages. In that excellent Speech, one knows not which to admire moſt, the Apoſtle's Eloquence, or his Addreſs. And perhaps if the Beauties of this Apology had been found in the Writings of a *Greek* or *Roman* Orator, the Maſters of Rhetorick would have preferred them to whatever is now moſt celebrated in that Way. It is indeed rather to be wiſhed, than expected, that every Man of God ſhould be thus thoroughly furniſhed for the good Work. But as it will always fare beſt with Religion when its Intereſts are in ſuch Hands; ſo every Endeavour after this uſeful Wiſdom, how

ſhort ſoever it may fall of the Apoſtle's Pattern, will have Merit with Men, and moſt certainly find Acceptance and Reward from God. In ſhort, there is no Image, under which the Duty of a Clergyman is repreſented in Scripture, not even the loweſt and moſt familiar ones, but what eaſily and naturally ſuggeſt to them the Neceſſity of Caution and Prudence: They are ſometimes compared to Sowers: Under which Reſemblance the Wiſdom of the Serpent will alone enable them to diſtinguiſh what Seed is propereſt for that Part of God's Huſbandry, which falls to every particular Man's Cultivation; to hit the kindlieſt Seaſons for that Work, and to preſerve the Seed ſown from being choaked by ſecular Cares, or over-run by the Weeds of Error and Hereſy. At other Times the Officers of Chriſt's Church are conſidered as Builders, whoſe Wiſdom it is, firſt to lay a firm Foundation, and upon that to raiſe the Superſtructure of ſound Faith and unblameable Practice. But here, thro' the unhappy Circumſtances of the preſent Age, they are greatly hindered, and called off from this

this bleſſed Work. Whilſt they are building up the City and Temple of God, they ſuffer continual Interruption from the Enemies to the Chriſtian Name. As it was in *Nehemiah*'s Days, ſo is it in ours. The *Sanballats* and the *Tobiahs* of the Times mock our ſpiritual Labours: They ſcoff at Chriſtianity, as an Edifice without a Foundation, ſaying, that *if a Fox go up he ſhall break down our Stone-Wall.* We are conſtrained therefore, like *Nehemiah*'s Builders, with one Hand to work, and with another to hold a Weapon. In ſuch a Situation there is Room for the utmoſt Exerciſe of Wiſdom and Prudence, in the Choice of proper Methods for the Defence of the common Faith.

Under this Head I ſhall only add, that we have a ſpecial Call for Prudence and Circumſpection in the common Actions of Life, as well as in thoſe which immediately relate to our holy Profeſſion. The Eyes of the World are upon us in every Part of our Conduct: And if we do at any time remarkably tranſgreſs the Rules of Diſcre-

tion, tho' the firſt bad Impreſſions reach no further than our Perſons, they never fail in the End to affect the Credit of Religion. So long as we carry our Treaſures in *Earthen Veſſels*, it will perhaps be impoſſible always to guard againſt little Slips and Inadvertencies: But the Habit of Care and Caution, if once contracted, will preſerve any Man from frequent and groſs Indecencies.

But however neceſſary human Prudence may be to thoſe who act in Things pertaining to God, yet unleſs it be accompanied with Integrity and Virtue, it is capable of ſerving the worſt Purpoſes, and is ſeldom applied otherwiſe: For which Reaſon, after our Lord had recommended to his Apoſtles the Wiſdom of the Serpent, he immediately qualifies it, by farther requiring that they *be Harmleſs as Doves*. He knew that when Wiſdom is not reſtrained by Uprightneſs and Innocence, it could not ſafely be truſted with the Stewardſhip of the Myſteries of God: And certain it is, that this Obſervation has been but too well verified

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in the Church of *Rome*, whoſe Guides, by a Series of Stratagem, and in Order to gratify their own Avarice and Ambition, have made Chriſtianity ſo enormous, that they have been compelled to ſecrete the Standard of its original Purity. She has baniſhed the Dove entirely out of her Compoſition, and with the Wiſdom of the Serpent has united its noxiouſneſs. But in the Reformed Church of *England* thoſe two Properties, which Chriſt hath joined together in my Text, are ſtill happily mixt. There Religion keeps its native Harmleſſneſs, and God, as of old out of *Sion*, appears in perfect Beauty. Never ſure did any Church defer more to the Civil Magiſtrate, or carry a milder Hand towards the People. Claims indeed ſhe has to Obedience in Spirituals, not founded on ſuppoſititious Decretals, or forged Donations of Princes, like the Pontificate of *Rome*, but built upon the Word of God, and neceſſary in the Nature of the Thing to the Church, as a viſible Society. Happy therefore are the Clergy in ſuch a Communion, where no Services nor Declarations are required from

them, but what they may punctually Diſcharge, and yet continue *Harmleſs as Doves*. Under ſuch Encouragment, how inexcuſable muſt they be, who do not earneſtly and chearfully apply themſelves to all the Duties of their high and holy Calling? If Induſtry be Praiſe-worthy in every other Profeſſion, ſurely a perfunctory Performance of Duty cannot be held ſufficient in ours: And whilſt it is recorded in Scripture, as the bright and diſtinguiſhing Character of our Maſter, that he went about doing Good, we his Servants muſt be ſtupid or partial to the laſt Degree before we can perſuade ourſelves, that we ſhall be accepted if we ſit ſtill and do no Hurt. How glorious a Periphraſis in Scripture-Style is that, which expreſſes the firſt Chriſtian Clergy, under the Character of Perſons who laboured in the Lord: Who laboured in the Word and Doctrine? And whoever expects the World ſhould eſteem him very highly in Love for his Work's Sake, will certainly be diſappointed, unleſs he firſt convinces them, that he is diligent therein. For a Loyterer in any Way

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is justly a Character of Contempt: But none meet with it so deservedly, as those who do the Work of the Lord negligently. I speak not this to condemn any Man, but to stir up myself and others to Zeal and Activity in that Service, which is our Glory, and our Crown of Rejoicing. The Account we have to give of the Souls committed to our Care, is a Consideration that will ever affect the most industrious Servant of the Lord with Dread and awful Concern: And nothing would relieve him from the Perplexities, occasioned by such Contemplations, but the Remembrance that he has a gracious Master, who is not in any Case extreme to mark what is done amiss. But tho' God is so merciful, as to make all just Allowances for Omissions, which proceed from Infirmity, we have no Reason to expect Forgiveness at his Hands for Neglects, that owe their Rise to habitual Sloth, or needless and studied Avocations.

Sure I am, that could I otherwise be just to my Subject I need not say before my present Audience, how necessary it is for those,

thoſe, who in a holy Function would be *Harmleſs as Doves*, to ſtand clear of Immorality. A vicious Clergyman is a Character ſo abſurd, that it is impoſſible that he, to whom it belongs, ſhould do any Good, and ſo odious, that he cannot fail of doing unſpeakable Miſchief. Certain it is, that no Man's perſonal Faults ought to be objected to his Profeſſion: But in Fact they too generally are, and have been at all Times. How much then is it to be wiſhed, that every ſpiritual Guide may be indued with Innocency of Life, that neither the Cauſe of Virtue nor Religion may be wounded thro' their Sides? Indeed, if we may be allowed to form a Judgment from the Silence of our Enemies upon this Head, ſuch Scandals have not for a long time been more infrequent, than they are at preſent. Their Rage has of late ſpent itſelf rather upon the Faults of the Church, than its Miniſters. Creeds, Confeſſions, and other Teſts of Conformity, tho' as old as Chriſtianity itſelf, and hitherto practiſed by all Parties of ſober Chriſtians, are now diſcovered to be rank Oppreſſion and Perſecution.

tion. Nay, if we are to believe ſome Men, we have had Popery and the Inquiſition amongſt us ever ſince the Reformation, without perceiving either. It would be Loſs of Time, and an Abuſe of this Reverend Audience, to enter upon a ſerious Refutation of ſuch ſenſeleſs Calumny. I ſhall only wiſh, what naturally occurs upon the mention of it, that ſo wanton an Application of real and dreadful Grievances in the *Romiſh* Communion, to the innocent and moderate Proviſions made by the Church of *England*, may not wear off thoſe popular Averſions to Popery, which have hitherto been a conſiderable Means of preventing its Return amongſt us.

There is another Point yet behind, which it behoves all to regard, who would preſerve a due Decorum in the Clerical Life, and ſupport the Honour of Religion in a wicked and unbelieving Age. We all know, that one great Aim of Chriſtianity is, to wean Men from too cloſe an Attachment to this World, and the Things thereof, in order to make them naturally, as

well as meritoriouſly qualified for that which is to come. We know likewiſe that the Decay of Religion at preſent is in nothing more viſible, than in the univerſal Prevalence of worldly Views and Affections. Pride, Luxury, Senſuality, and Avarice engroſs the Thoughts, and employ the Hours, which, in better Times, uſed to be beſtowed on Proviſion for the Soul, and its future Well-being. I take it therefore for granted, that none of us are wanting in earneſt Endeavours to recover thoſe under our Care, from ſuch inconſiderate and fatal Courſes. But in vain will our Labours prove, unleſs our Admonitions be ſeconded by a ſuitable Example: For if the World, which always ſcrutinizes the Actions of Clergymen with the moſt particular Exactneſs, ſhall obſerve them to engage as deeply in the Purſuits and Pleaſures of Life, as the Carnal and the Voluptuous do, they will naturally doubt, whether we ourſelves have thoſe heavenly Views, wherewith it is our Buſineſs and our Practice to inſpire others. I am far from thinking either the Acquirement of Wealth, or a ſober Enjoyment

ment of it, inconſiſtent with the ſpiritual Views of a Chriſtian. Only that it behoves all Mankind, and eſpecially Clergymen, to convince the World, as well by their Methods of obtaining Riches, as uſing them, that they are verily perſuaded they ſhall be accountable for both. The Denial of Ungodlineſs and wordly Luſt has always appeared a hard Leſſon to the Earthly and the Senſual; and will ſeem doubly ſo, if it be found, that thoſe who lay ſuch heavy Burdens upon the Shoulders of others, will not move them with one of their Fingers themſelves.

Since then, ſo many and great are the Difficulties that attend the right Diſcharge of the ſacred Function: Since the moſt conſummate Prudence and Sanctity of Manners is required therein, how important a Truſt is that of Patronage, and how ſtrict ought to be the Care of thoſe concerned therewith, to free their own Souls by a moſt diligent Search after Perſons properly qualified with Wiſdom and Innocence for the Paſtoral Charge? Such as are moſt

forward to note the Defects of the Clergy, would do well to conſider how eaſily moſt of theſe Scandals might be prevented, if Patrons would be open to no Sollicitations, but the modeſt ones of eminent Merit. I am however perſuaded, that whoever obſerves how little Regard is paid to this, by many in the Diſpoſal of Benefices, will rather ſee Cauſe to wonder at the Number of Men in the Church, that are excellently qualified for the Miniſtrations of it, and to aſcribe it to the Bleſſing of God on our laudable Methods of Education, and the Care of our Eccleſiaſtical Governors.

Where therefore the greater and weightier Matters of Morality are carefully attended to, the Arduouſneſs and Delicacy of the Clerical Character ought eaſily to obtain Pardon for little Slips and Errors againſt Prudence, from which the beſt and wiſeſt of Men cannot hope to be always exempt. Eſpecially conſidering that we live in Times, when Candour and Benevolence are ſo recommended, as if on them alone did hang all the Law and the Prophets. Infidelity,

delity, Hereſy, and Schiſm were once reckoned grievous Sins; but they are of late covered, or rather ſanctified by the Charms of Benevolence. Religious Eſtabliſhments were formerly accounted, in the human View of them, to be wiſe Proviſions for the Peace and Purity of the Church; but touched by this modern Teſt, they are cried down for tyrannical Appointments, calculated only for the Promotion of Slavery and Bigotry. Nay, ſo extenſive is this pretended Philanthropy, that not contented with leſſening the Number of Sins here, it has proceeded to contract the Duration of their Puniſhment hereafter. Now tho' we cannot approve of this *Laodicean* Spirit, we may ſo far modeſtly claim the Benefit of it, as to expect that mere Indiſcretions may be as pardonable in us, as real Crimes are in other Men. But whether we can prevail for ſo reaſonable an Indulgence or no, it will certainly be our Intereſt and our Prudence, to ſtand as little in need of it as may be. And as the only effectual Way to ſecure Honour and Reverence to our Profeſſion, is to

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ſhew that we revere it ourſelves; ſo that Regard muſt be expreſſed in a conſtant Watchfulneſs over our Words and Actions, that nothing out of Character may be ſeen in us, or heard from us. But above all, we ſhall beſt promote the Dignity of our Calling, by our Uſefulneſs and Induſtry in it, and by a ſteady Adherence to thoſe holy Truths, which God has committed to our eſpecial Cuſtody, however contrary they may be to the Paſſions and Prejudices of Men, who have not the Faith, or who hold it not in Sincerity. Let us diligently employ every Gift of God, and every Means that he ſhall put into our Hands, to his Honour, and the Advancement of his Kingdom amongſt Men. Thus if we ſhall behave, when our Maſter comes to take Account of his Servants, whatever Uſage we may meet withall in the World, we may be ſure of entering into the Joy of our Lord.

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SERMON

Preach'd before the

Religious Societies

IN THE

Church of St. *Mary le Bow*, *LONDON.*

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SERMON

Preach'd before the

Religious Societies, &c.

1 THES. v. 11.

Wherefore comfort yourſelves together, and edify one another, as alſo ye do.

THESE Words are a Conſequence from what our Apoſtle had declared in the two foregoing Verſes, *viz.* *That God hath not appointed us to Wrath, but to obtain Salvation by our Lord Jeſus*

Chriſt, who died for us, that whether we wake or ſleep, we ſhould live together with him. Indeed, had Things been otherwiſe, had far the greater Part of Mankind been appointed to Wrath, either by any Decree of Reprobation, or by withholding from them the Benefits of Chriſt's Redemption, there would have been no Room for Chriſtians mutually to comfort, or to edify each the other: For, at this Rate, each Man, who was not ſatisfied of his own Salvability, would himſelf continue inconſolable, and would grow remiſs about his own particular Edification; ſo far would he be from comforting and edifying his Chriſtian Brethren. But ſince we are aſſured, by no leſs an Authority than that of St. *Paul, that God hath appointed no one to Wrath, but that all may obtain Salvation by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, the End of whoſe dying for us was, that at his ſecond coming, all who are his, whether then quick or dead, *ſhould live together with him*; this gives every Chriſtian Comfort in himſelf, and encourages him to impart the ſame Conſolation unto others: This ſatisfies him, that

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his Labour for his own proper Salvation is not in vain in the Lord, and that he may effectually beſtow his charitable Endeavours to edify others alſo.

It is further obſervable, that the Exhortation in the Text is addreſſed to the *Theſſalonians*, in their private and Lay Capacities, and not as a Society made up of Governors and Governed. For the Verſe immediately following it, recommends a Duty, which concerned them only as private Chriſtians, *viz. To know them which labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and admoniſh them, and to eſteem them very highly in Love for their Works ſake.* It does not appear, that our Apoſtle exhorted his Lay *Theſſalonians* to comfort and to edify one another, from their Neglect or Remiſſneſs in theſe Particulars; but on the contrary, he owns in the Concluſion of the Text, *that they did it already.* So that he is to be underſtood rather as encouraging them to perſevere i that laudable Courſe, than as now firſt r commending the Practice to them.

And indeed, this Forwardneſs of the firſt Chriſtians to promote each others Salvation, remarkably anſwered St. *Paul*'s frequent Inſtructions upon that Head. They then *looked not on their own Things only, but alſo on the Things of others*; they exhorted one another daily, and followed the Things wherewith one might edify another; they warned them that were unruly, comforted the feeble-minded, ſupported the weak, and were patient towards all Men. They conſidered themſelves as the Members of Chriſt's myſtical Body, and as ſuch had the ſame Care one for another. Whenever any the moſt inconſiderable Particular in that Community behaved unworthy of his Chriſtian Calling, it was a common Concern to reduce him to Order and Decency, and till that was done, all the Members thought themſelves to ſuffer Diſgrace with him. And on the other Hand, if any the meaneſt of that holy Calling adorned the Doctrine of God by a Life of Virtue and true Religion, and was honourable on that Account, every Fellow-

Member

Member rejoiced with him, accounting it a common Glory and Benefit to the Chriſtian Cauſe. In thoſe Days, Believers looked on each other as Fellow-Soldiers in a ſpiritual Warfare, and every Man ſtrove, both by Exhortation and Example, to animate his Brethren with Zeal, Courage, and Perſeverance againſt the Enemies of the Croſs of Chriſt: And by ſuch Conduct as this, with the Bleſſing of God upon it, the Goſpel triumphed over all Oppoſition, and prevailed againſt every evil Work, till it became the Profeſſion, as well as the Praiſe of the whole Earth.

But for many Ages has this Love of the Brethren been waxing colder, till it is in a Manner extinguiſhed in the Chriſtian World. The ſeamleſs Garment of Chriſt is now rent into innumerable Shreds, each denying and diſavowing the other, and regardleſs of whatever happens to Chriſtians of a different Communion: Nay, even among Believers of the ſame Denomination, where do we ſee any Remains of that Care for each other, which formerly obtained in

every Member of that Body whereof Chriſt is the Head? Nor, as Things go, is this to be wondered at. For the Ground of that invariable Regard, which the Primitive Chriſtians had to each other's Salvation, was their Sollicitude for their own Souls. It ought not therefore to be Matter of much Aſtoniſhment to us, that in an Age, when the Generality of Men ſo lazily ſet about working out their own Salvation, they ſhould become utterly careleſs about the eternal Welfare of others.

In ſome Degree to remedy this ſad Supineneſs, and to ſtir up others to greater Diligence about their own and the common Salvation, the religious Societies, to which I am now addreſſing myſelf, were originally inſtituted; and doubtleſs many excellent and uſeful Purpoſes may be ſerved thereby. It gives us an edifying Taſte of the early and pure Ages of Chriſtianity, when Believers were zealous for one another's ſpiritual Welfare, and thought nothing foreign to them, that concerned the Honour of Religion, and the everlaſting Intereſt

Intereſt of every Soul for which Chriſt died. Every one that is engaged in theſe Fraternities, finds himſelf obliged to be watchful over his own Ways, from Motives peculiar to his preſent Situation, or ſuch at leaſt as become thereby more intereſting and cogent. He that purpoſes to quicken others in the Ways of Virtue and Piety, muſt, above all Things, be exemplary and unblameable in his own Conduct. And hence it will come to paſs, that a ſet and ſerious Purpoſe of reforming our Brethren, will naturally, as well as meritoriouſly, promote our own Salvation: Beſides, Societies like theſe, are wonderfully adapted to do Service in ſuch an Age as ours, wherein the Enemies to Chriſtianity have done more Miſchief to it by Scoffing, than by any other Method whatever. It is therefore a ſeaſonable and inſtructive Leſſon to all, on whom Ridicule would otherwiſe make bad Impreſſions, to ſee ſo many Bodies of Men avowing themſelves not to be aſhamed of the Croſs of Chriſt, but openly and zealouſly acting to promote Goodneſs, neither fearing the Gates of Hell,

Hell, nor the Seats of the Scornful. For theſe Reaſons, and many others that might be enumerated, all that wiſh well to the Cauſe of God and Chriſt, muſt join in ſaying, The Lord proſper you, we wiſh you good Luck in the Name of the Lord.

But the more uſeful theſe Societies are when properly regulated, ſo much the greater Care ought to be taken, that no Root of Bitterneſs may ſpring up amongſt them. It is natural to ſuppoſe, that the grand Enemy to the Truth will ſet on Foot all his Devices, in order to bereave Religion of ſo uſeful an Aſſiſtance; and that ill Men, his Accomplices, will ſpy out and improve every the ſmalleſt Defect or Obliquity obſervable amongſt them. Altho', therefore, I have nothing to charge upon theſe Societies in general, but believe them, for the moſt Part, ſteadily to adhere to the Rules of their Inſtitution, yet ſuffer me to be jealous over you with a Godly Jealouſy; and ſince I have no Exerciſe for that Paſſion, from any preſent Miſconducts, permit

permit me, by proper Cautions, to anticipate future ones.

I do with great Pleaſure obſerve, that by the original Plan of theſe Societies, and alſo by the preſent ſtanding Orders, no Addition or Alteration is to be made in your Methods, without the Conſent of ſome pious or learned Divine of the Church of *England*, eſpecially of the Preſident for the Time being, who is always to be taken out of the Clergy of the Eſtabliſhment: And I take it for granted, that hereby were intended ſuch Clergymen only, as live orderly under the Direction of the Biſhops their Superiors, and have a ſtated Reſidence, in which they diſcharge the Offices of their ſacred Function. If theſe Circumſtances are not expreſsly ſet down by thoſe who drew up the Orders of your Societies, it was becauſe thoſe pious Men did not imagine the Time would come, when Men, who call themſelves Prieſts or Presbyters of the Church of *England*, would break through the Laws of Church and State, defy the paſtoral Admonitions of their proper

per Superiors, and caſt perpetual Reproach upon all their Brethren who are Friends to Order and good Government, and who diſlike their tumultuous and itinerant Aſſemblies. Were you to believe the Accuſations they bring againſt us, you would be at a Loſs for pious Miniſters to preſide over and direct you upon Emergencies; and for learned ones, that any of us are ſuch, they make it our Vice and our Reproach. If ever, therefore, the Advice of the Apoſtle, not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits, whether they be of God, was ſeaſonable, this is the Time. Above all Things therefore, Brethren, be careful whom you chuſe as the ſpiritual Directors of theſe religious Societies: Let them be ſuch as are not only pious, but peaceable and modeſt; Men that are really, and, at the ſame Time, ſoberly religious.

It is the avowed Deſign of your Inſtitution (and no better, or more important one, can be purſued by mortal Man) to promote real Holineſs of Heart and Life, in the Uſe of ſuch Means as the Word of God

God directs us to, and in Reliance on the Assistance of God's Grace, and the Aid of his blessed Spirit. But it is the declared Opinion of these new Religionists, against whom I am desirous to warn and to guard you, that when you have done all these Things, you may still be as far from the Kingdom of Heaven as ever: For to this Effect they speak of one, who, till he resigned himself over to their Singularities, was a zealous Promoter of these religious Societies, and unblameably pursued every Method for attaining to Christian Perfection, that Scripture, soberly interpreted, points out to us. If ever therefore you hearken to these mistaken Men, they will put you utterly out of Conceit with all those laudable Rules, by which your religious Conduct has been hitherto formed, and in which you have found so much Joy, Peace, and Improvement. Instead of working out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling, which, at present, you conceive is to be the Employment of all your Days, they will direct you to build your Salvation on Assurance thereof; which, whoever cannot

attain unto, muſt utterly Deſpair of Heaven. Inſtead of founding your Hopes of Happineſs on the Covenant of Baptiſm, whereby you became Members of Chriſt, Children or Sons of God, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, and which will be moſt certainly made good to all, who honeſtly endeavour to live up to the Conditions of it; they will perſuade you to expect a ſubſequent Regeneration, unknown to the Scriptures and primitive Antiquity. St. *Peter*, 1 *Ep. Chap.* iii. *ver.* 21. aſſures us, *that Baptiſm ſaves us, when accompanied by the Anſwer of a good Conſcience.* But theſe Refiners make all this of little Signification towards our becoming Children of God, or fit Veſſels for the Holy Ghoſt; but, as if we were, notwithſtanding, yet Children of Wrath, that bleſſed Spirit muſt afterwards beget us again, or elſe, it ſeems, we can have no Claim to our heavenly Inheritance.

But you, my Beloved, have not ſo learned Chriſt, and I truſt will never ſo learn him, eſpecially whilſt you take the plain Word

Word of God for your Rule, and continue under the Direction of our Church, which ſubmits all her Doctrines to be tried by that infallible Touchſtone.

It was early foreſeen, that, as Portions of Scripture were neceſſarily to be read in the Meetings of theſe Societies, as a principal Means of promoting Holineſs of Life, and theſe again would become more effectual by the Aſſiſtance of Expoſitors; ſo it would be of great Importance to have proper ones recommended to them, leſt for want of Knowledge in theſe Matters, Choice might be made of ſuch as would miſlead them. And to this Method, I preſume, moſt of theſe Societies have invariably adhered: And I am ſorry to find there have been any Exceptions to this excellent Rule. But it ſhould ſeem that in ſome, ſuch eſpecially wherein the Men of the new Way have preſided, *Hammond* and *Burket*, and every other approved Expoſitor, has been laid aſide to make Way for the *extempore* Thoughts of theſe great Pretenders to Illumination. How they ſucceed

ceed in this Work, we may partly gueſs, from the Contempt uſually put by them on literal Interpretation of Scripture: For if this latter Method be not conſtantly obſerved, except where the Letter conveys an abſurd Senſe, or breaks in upon the Analogy of Faith, the good Word of God will be no longer a Lanthorn unto our Feet, or a Light unto our Paths; we ſhall loſe all Benefit from it as a Rule of Faith and Manners, and muſt receive inſtead thereof any Senſe, that a wicked or weak Antagoniſt ſhall put upon it. By which Means it may ſo happen, that Hereſy, Popery, and even Infidelity itſelf, may be recommended to us as the hidden and ſpiritual Meaning of thoſe ſacred Oracles: And the leaſt Miſchief to be expected from ſuch Interpretation, will be a fluctuating and uncertain Direction, inſtead of an uniform Standard of Chriſtian Duty. In ſhort, it will open a Door for endleſs Variety of Opinion, and let in Fanaticiſm upon us, as happened from much the ſame Cauſes about a Century ago.

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I intimated above, that there are nevertheleſs Circumſtances, under which it becomes the Duty of a ſound Interpreter to recede from the Letter of Scripture, in order to qualify an abſurd or plainly erroneous Meaning, which may be conveyed by an obvious Acceptation of the Words. And hence likewiſe appears the Expediency, if not the Neceſſity, of ſelect and approved Commentators, to be conſulted as Occaſion ſhall require, in all your religious Conferences; on whoſe Judgment you may ſafely rely, as oft as any Doubt ariſes, whether judging according to Appearances, will be to form a righteous Judgment of any particular Scripture Paſſage. For, ſometimes a too rigorous Adherence to the obvious Meaning, has ſet the Bible at Variance with itſelf, and been the Source of grievous Errors in practical, as well as in ſpeculative Points of Religion. Thro' the Want of due Attention to Conſiderations of this Nature, the *Quakers* have been led into a Miſtake, which they are ſtill very fond of, as if Oaths of all Kinds were ab-

ſolutely unlawful. It has been in vain to remonſtrate to them, that holy Men, in both Teſtaments, have, on ſolemn and ſerious Occaſions, called God to witneſs the Truths they had delivered; and that the inſpired Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, mentions the Uſe of judiciary Oaths which to Men are an End of all Strife, with a ſeeming Approbation of their Uſefulneſs, and without the leaſt Reprehenſion of the Practice; and this many Years after our Saviour had commanded his Diſciples not to ſwear at all. But the Sound of theſe Words fills the Heads of thoſe unhappy and ſtubborn People, and they determine to abide by the literal Senſe of them, without reconciling it to other Scriptures, or regarding the great Uſes of ſolemn Oaths in civil and ſocial Life.

But I have in my Eye another Inſtance of the Miſchiefs ariſing from unqualified Men's expounding Scriptures, and that even in religious Societies; which ſhews how wiſely it has been recommended to them, to conſult approved Commentators upon

upon every Difficulty that occurs in reading the Bible: For if the publick Accounts deceive us not, there is, or at leaſt lately was, an Aſſembly for religious Purpoſes in this City, the Members whereof think themſelves indiſpenſibly obliged to confeſs their Sins before the whole Society; and for ſo believing, they vouch the Authority of the Apoſtle St. *James*, who, *Chap.* v. *ver.* 16. of his general Epiſtle, has theſe Words, *Confeſs your Faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much.* Theſe Words are, to the Members of the above-mentioned Society, a Kind of ſpiritual Charter of Incorporation, for the Purpoſes of receiving each other's Confeſſions, and praying for each other. Now, true it is, that theſe Words of St. *James*, taken apart from the Context, and without attending to the Meaning of the Expreſſion *one to another* in other Places of the New Teſtament, do obviouſly ſignify a Command to Chriſtians to confeſs their Sins to each other; and the following Words

pray one for another, ſeem to point out a common Aſſembly as the proper Scene of ſuch Confeſſions, that the Perſons confeſſing may, by that Means, have the Benefit of more, and thoſe likewiſe joint Interceſſions on their Behalf. But had this Society taken the Senſe of Dr. *Hammond*, or any other approved Commentator on this Paſſage, they would have been told, that it does by no Means authorize the Practice ſet up amongſt them, of confeſſing their Sins at their religious Meetings, and much leſs require it. The two preceding Verſes run thus, -*Is any Sick among you, let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with Oil in the Name of the Lord. And the Prayer of Faith ſhall ſave the Sick, and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up; and if he have committed Sins, they ſhall be forgiven him.* Then follow the Words in queſtion, *Confeſs your Sins one to another, and pray one for another*, &c. Theſe Words, therefore, connected with what goes before, moſt probably mean only, that ſick Chriſtians ſhould confeſs their Sins to the Elders that

viſited them, who ſhould pray for them, and is no Direction to Chriſtians in general for their Behaviour to each other at all Times, when they aſſemble for religious Purpoſes. Nor is it any Objection to this limited Acceptation of the Words before us, that Chriſtians are not therein required to confeſs their Sins to the Elders of the Church only, but to each other: For after the very ſame general and indefinite Manner, Duties to particular Men are elſewhere delivered and required in the New Teſtament; particularly 1 *Pet.* v. 5. where the Apoſtle after ſaying, *Likewiſe ye Younger ſubmit yourſelves to the Elder*, adds, *Yea, all of you be ſubject one to another.* But theſe laſt Words, in their obvious Acceptation, require an impoſſible Thing: For if all Chriſtians were to be ſubject one to another, there could be no Superiors among them; but all Degrees and Ranks muſt be loſt and confounded in this reciprocal Submiſſion. St. *Peter*'s Meaning therefore muſt be, what we find in the Paraphraſe of the learned Dr. *Hammond* upon the Place; all of you muſt be

ſubject unto thoſe that are ſet over you. And ſo likewiſe in the Paſſage of St. *James*, tho' Chriſtians ſeem to be called upon to a Confeſſion of Faults one to another, yet the Meaning might be, and moſt probably was, that in Time of Sickneſs they ſhould confeſs their Faults unto the Elders of the Church, whom, in the Verſes preceding, they are required to ſend for at ſuch Seaſons, with an Aſſurance, that, by their Prayers, if the Sick have committed Sins, they ſhall be forgiven him; and not that it was to be a Duty of ſtanding and perpetual Obligation among Chriſtians, for them to confeſs their Faults to one another, when they meet together to promote their common Edification and Salvation.

I ſpeak not after this Manner to you, dearly beloved in the Lord, as if I apprehended you in Danger of running into this, or the like Errors; but rather to ſhew the Happineſs and Prudence of thoſe Regulations, by which you are preſerved from miſtaken Methods of Religion, and to make you ſet a juſt Value on thoſe Rules,

Rules, which have hitherto, next to the Grace of God, ſecured you from the preſent reigning Deluſions. It is the great Duty and Privilege of Believers to ſearch the Scriptures: But ſince there are many Things in them hard to be underſtood, which ignorant and unſtable Men wreſt to their own Deſtruction, and that of thoſe who hearken to them; it is ſure a high Point of Chriſtian Prudence to make a fit Choice of proper Guides and Helps for the right Underſtanding of them. But this is done to your Hands, in the original Plan of your Societies, and by the pious Care of thoſe Miniſters of the Eſtabliſhment, who have ſucceſſively preſided over you.

What remains therefore, but that I intreat and exhort you to proceed, without wavering, in this, and every other laudable Method, that has hitherto obtained amongſt you. You have now had many Years Trial and Experience, how conducive they have been to promote true Religion amongſt you: And therefore I aſſure

myſelf you will reject every Attempt, that ſhall be made to put you out of Conceit with them, by ſuch as are given to change. Go on therefore to walk orderly, as well as warily, in theſe dangerous Days, ſubmitting yourſelves to, and attending upon in every publick Ordinance, your proper and authorized Paſtors: Let who will ſay unto you, ſee here or ſee there, go not after them, nor follow them. It matters not what thoſe Men's Pretences are, nor whether they are ſincere in their Ways, or wilful Deceivers: Sufficient it is, that theirs is not the Way of Modeſty, Peace, and Submiſſion to Superiors, and that manifold Miſchiefs have ariſen, and daily do ariſe, by their Means. The good Word of God is evil ſpoken of, his Miniſters more generally evil intreated, the Minds of many ignorant, but well-meaning Perſons, have been unſettled and driven to incurable Diſtraction. It can never therefore be a good Tree, which bringeth forth ſuch corrupt Fruit.

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In a Word, the Miſcarriages of theſe, and all other Enthuſiaſts, ſhould convince us all, that Religion and Piety themſelves ſtand in need of Prudence and Sobriety to guard them againſt dangerous Exceſſes, and that we have never more Occaſion to take Heed leſt we fall, than when we think we tread the firmeſt. Whilſt therefore we are inſtructing others, let us take Care that we ourſelves become not Caſtaways; and whilſt we ſtudy, by united Methods, to ſtem the Torrent of Impiety, that diſtinguiſhes the preſent licentious Age, let us take Care to evidence the Power, as well as the Form of Godlineſs, in our ſingle and ſeparate Capacities.

In Hands ſo holy and diſintereſted, the Word of God will ſurely proſper: The Light of ſuch Examples will ſhine before Men, and prevail with them to bring forth good Works, and to glorify our Father which is in Heaven. Which bleſſed End of all religious Societies and Combinations of Men, God of his infinite Mercy promote and proſper. To whom, *&c.*

SER.

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CHARITY SERMON.

MARK X. 13, 14.

And they brought young Children to him, that he ſhould touch them: And his Diſciples rebuked thoſe that brought them. But when Jeſus ſaw it, he was much diſpleaſed, and ſaid unto them, Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not: For of ſuch is the Kingdom of God.

THE Pertinence of theſe Words to one principal End of my Diſcourſe appears, I ſuppoſe, to every one upon the firſt Hearing. But before

fore I apply them thereto, it will be proper to explain them.

The 13th *ver.* then begins thus: *And they brought young Children to Chriſt, that he ſhould touch them.* St. *Matthew*, *Chap.* x. 13. explains what the *Jews* meant by touching theſe Children, ſaying, It was *that he ſhould put his Hands on them, and pray.* And accordingly Jeſus *took them up in his Arms, put his Hands on them, and bleſſed them:* As we learn from the 16th *ver.* of the Chapter of my Text. All this therefore ſeems to be implied under the Expreſſion of Touching, which elſewhere in Scripture ſometimes means laying hold of, and embracing.

Our Text proceeds, ſaying, that the *Diſciples rebuked thoſe* who *brought* theſe Children; and that *when Jeſus ſaw it, he was much diſpleaſed.* Probably he ſhewed, both in his Looks and Geſtures, much Indignation at his Diſciples for officiouſly keeping from him ſuch Objects of Love and Tenderneſs. There cannot well be

be a ſurer Sign of a bad and ungenerous Diſpoſition, than to be void of all Concern for Perſons of that helpleſs and innocent Age. No Wonder then that our Lord, who had every other human and amiable Quality, ſhould ſharply reprehend the Miſtake of his Diſciples, who thought it a Trouble to him to caſt his gracious Regards upon Infants. And leſt the ſame Miſapprehenſion ſhould induce the Diſciples, at any time afterwards, to interpoſe again ſo unſeaſonably, he immediately adds: *Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not.* He concludes this Charge with a Reaſon, *viz. For of ſuch is the Kingdom of God.*

How we are to underſtand theſe laſt Words is the grand Difficulty of the Text. Moſt Interpreters explain them thus: *Children thro' their Innocence and Simplicity are of all others the fitteſt Emblems of thoſe of whom the Chriſtian Church is made up here, and Heaven hereafter. It would therefore be highly unjuſt to keep thoſe from me, who are naturally qualified for that Kingdom,*

which I came to ſet up in the World. Now the Words of our Lord thus rendered, and thus explained, afford us a conſiderable Preſumption in favour of Infant Baptiſm: For tho' the Perſons, who brought theſe young Children to Chriſt, might have no ſuch Intention, his admitting them to come unto him, and bleſſing all ſuch, ſeems to be virtually receiving them into his new Covenant. We know that the Promiſe of God unto *Abraham*, that all Nations ſhould be taken into a ſaving Covenant by one of his Deſcendents, was conceived in the ſame Language, *viz. And in thy Seed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed.* And the common Form made uſe of by our Lord, when he invited Men to that Covenant, was, *Come unto me.* Now when grown Perſons are encouraged to come unto Chriſt, no one makes the leaſt doubt but that it is in order to commence his Diſciples. And why ſhould this be a Queſtion, when young Children are, in like Manner, encouraged to come unto him? Eſpecially when, in the latter Caſe, they are moreover declared to have thoſe very Qualifications,

tions, without which Perſons of riper Age can never come unto him effectually.

Thus you ſee that the Reaſon given by our Lord, for freely admitting young Children to come unto him, as it now ſtands in our authorized Tranſlation, has a moſt favourable Aſpect to the Practice of Infant Baptiſm. But I think I may venture to ſay, that a more grammatical, and every Way properer Tranſlation of the ſame Words may be had, which would be little leſs than deciſive for that Practice. Inſtead therefore of rendering, *For of ſuch is the Kingdom of God*, it ſhould have been, *For to ſuch the Kingdom of God belongs.* So our old *Engliſh* Tranſlation, commonly called the Biſhop's Bible, had it: And ſo it ſtands at this Day in that which has always been uſed by the *French* Reformed Churches. The ſame Conſtruction in the *Greek* often occurs in the New Teſtament, for which our laſt Tranſlators always give us the right and proper *Engliſh*, except unhappily in the Text. Thus, to give one Inſtance out of very many, when

our Lord says, *Matth.* v. 3. *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit*, Ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, our last Translators do not render, as in the Passage we are examining, *For of them is the Kingdom of Heaven*, but very justly and well, *For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*. Nor is there any thing harsh, or contrary to the Analogy of Scripture, in supposing our Lord to say, that to the young Children of *Jews* in his Days, the Kingdom of God belonged: For St. *Paul* has in effect said the same thing. Thus, *Gal.* iii. 16. he says, that *to Abraham and to his Seed were the Promises of the Covenant, confirmed of God in Christ, made.* And, *Rom.* ix. and the 4th *ver. that to the Jews belonged the Promises.* If therefore the Christian Covenant belonged to the *Jews* in general by Promise, what hurt can there be in descending to greater Specialty, and saying, that the Kingdom of God, which was the Subject of those Promises, belonged to the Infant, as well as to the adult Seed of *Abraham?*

Further,

Further, as Grammar requires ſuch a Verſion as I have propoſed, and the Analogy of Faith is not thereby infringed, ſo it ſuits better with the Context on both Hands, than the received Tranſlation does: For it more ſtrongly juſtifies our Lord's Diſpleaſure at the Diſciples, who diſcouraged Infants from being brought unto him; inaſmuch as their Coming unto him appears to be not a Matter of mere Expedience or Propriety, but of Right.

Again, with Relation to the *ver.* following my Text, what I call the true and grammatical Rendering makes it ſpeak a Senſe more worthy of our Saviour: For as the Words of the 14th *ver.* now ſtand in our Bibles, the 15th is only a Repetition of the ſame Senſe in different Words. The 14th *ver.* teaches us, that the Kingdom of God is compoſed, or made up of ſuch as Infants; and the 15th *ver.* that none who ſhall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little Child, can enter into it. I own that in general this would be no good Objection:

Becauſe ſuch Repetitions are oft deſignedly uſed in Scripture, to expreſs the greater Earneſtneſs. Thus, in the latter Verſe of my Text itſelf, our Saviour ſays, *Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not:* Which are two Words of the ſame Importance. And therefore I ſhould have made no Objection to the Repetition in the 14th and 15th Verſes in the Chapter of my Text, had not the 15th *ver.* been introduced with *Verily I ſay unto you.* For ſuch an Introduction never ſtands before a mere Repetition, but always either begins a new Senſe, or elſe improves and explains an old one, ever conveying to the Reader at leaſt clearer Ideas, than the Sentence immediately going before it had done. In ſhort, the good Agreement of that Verſion, which I have hitherto inſiſted on, with the whole Context, will beſt appear from the following Paraphraſe. *The Jews brought young Children to Chriſt, as to a Prophet, that they might receive his ſolemn Benediction; which the Diſciples obſerving, they rebuked thoſe that brought them. But our Lord was diſpleaſed at his Diſciples for ſo doing,*

doing, and charged them with ſome Vehemency no more to forbid thoſe young Ones acceſs to him, who being the Seed of Abraham, *and Owners of the Promiſes made to that Seed, had thereby a Right to that Kingdom which he was then ſetting up in the World.* He further aſſures them, *That beſides this Right, founded on a divine Promiſe, Children have a natural Recommendation to it by their Innocence, which grown Perſons not having, are forced to ſupply by Repentance: And that if they did not thus receive the Kingdom of God as little Children, they could not enter therein.*

And thus you ſee that the true Rendering of the latter Words in my Text, gives Nerves and Strength, as well as Perſpicuity to our Lord's entire Diſcourſe. And if he has really there declared, that young Children among the *Jews* had a Right to the Kingdom of God, the ſame muſt equally hold good of the Children of Chriſtian Parents. For the Promiſe, on which the Right of the former ſtood, was not made to them only, but alſo to as many others,

as the Lord our God ſhall call. But of this Number we are. For tho' we ſtand excluded by the Letter of the Promiſe, yet the inſpired Writings of the New Teſtament declare us to be within the Intention of it; and conſequently our young Children have the ſame Right with theirs to the Kingdom of God, or the Chriſtian Church. And ſeeing that, as ſuch, the Kingdom of God belongeth to them, ſo alſo does Baptiſm, which is the inſtituted Means of admitting Men thereto. They ought therefore to be baptized, and whatever pretended Diſciples of Chriſt rebuke thoſe who bring their young Ones to him in this Manner, do them a manifeſt Injury, and contradict the Charge given in the Text againſt forbidding them Admittance. They ſet themſelves againſt the Example of our Saviour, who appears on this very Occaſion a Defender of the ſpiritual Privileges of young Children, againſt the miſtaken Notions of his Followers.

We therefore of the Church of *England* are not only charitable, but alſo juſt in bringing

bringing our Infants to Chriſt's Holy Baptiſm. And were we but as generally careful to make them lead the reſt of their Lives anſwerable to theſe Beginnings, how happy would it be for both?

But too few there be of any Condition, who ſeriouſly mind this important Duty. And among the poorer Sort many are found, who tho' ever ſo well inclined, ſeem to want Means and Opportunities of giving their young Ones an Education ſuitable to that Character which Baptiſm has ſtampt on them. The Conſideration of theſe Things has induced wiſe and good Men for many Years laſt to ſupply ſo ſad a Defect by publick Engagements and Contributions. And accordingly you have here before you thoſe young Children, who have been ſingled out on this Footing, to be inſtructed in the Laws of that Kingdom of God, which Chriſt, in the Text, declares belongeth to them.

Now ſurely no Chriſtian Audience, after hearing this, can need a further Recom-

mendation of ſo uſeful a Charity. To relieve the bodily Neceſſities of our Fellow-creatures only, by feeding the Hungry, clothing the Naked, and adminiſtering to the Sick, are doubtleſs Offices worthy of a Chriſtian. And yet in doing this our Righteouſneſs exceeds not that of the moral Heathen, who, as Men, had a Tenderneſs of Nature perpetually ſolliciting them for miſerable Objects. But a Chriſtian is a new Creature: And therefore beſides the Compaſſion which belongs to him in his natural State, he hath or ought to have Bowels in Chriſt. And to theſe it is I would appeal in the Behalf of theſe little Ones, who, without your Aſſiſtance, muſt continue hungry and naked in Spirituals, and too probably may ſtarve and periſh everlaſtingly for want of that ſincere Milk of the Word, by which alone they can grow up to Chriſtian Perfection. If therefore there be any Conſolation in Chriſt, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies, let them now be manifeſted in the Labour of Love, which is before you. Think

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what a Comfort it will prove to you hereafter, when you hope to ſee theſe poor Objects grown to Maturity, and honeſtly diſcharging the ſeveral Duties of Life, adorning the Doctrine of God by their wholeſome Examples, and furniſhing the World with noble Specimens of the Power of true Godlineſs; think, I ſay, with yourſelves, how raviſhing ſuch a Sight will be, if you can ſay, you have in any Proportion contributed thereto. And, on the other Hand, if any Plant in this ſpiritual Vineyard ſhall hereafter bring forth ſour Grapes: If the Wiles of Satan, or a natural bad Diſpoſition in ſome of theſe young Ones, ſhould get the better of all the Proviſion that has been made for the Good of their Souls, you will ſee it without any Self-reproach, when you are conſcious of having uſed the likelieſt Means for preventing it.

The Generality of the World excuſe themſelves from Acts of Bounty and Charity, by recounting the ungrateful Returns of ſuch as they have already obliged: But

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in the Caſe before us we may reaſonably hope for better Things. For whereas in the general Diſperſion of Favours and Kindneſſes, they often light on bad Ground, and produce nothing; *here* we, in ſome Sort, make the Soil, and therefore may be almoſt reſponſible for its Fruitfulneſs. Among other Branches of a Chriſtian Education, theſe Children are trained up in an immoveable Reverence towards their Benefactors: And next to their Duty to God, the King, and their natural Parents, they are taught to fix their Regards on thoſe whom Providence has raiſed up for the Relief of their greateſt and moſt preſſing Neceſſities. Another Difficulty about the Direction of Charity has been, that of finding real Objects. *Here* then they may be had or no where: For the Poor, whoſe Cauſe lies now before us, are neither lewd nor lazy; but innocent and hopeful.

It is now many Years ſince the monſtrous Growth of open Immorality induced many pious and publick-ſpirited Men to join in Societies for Reformation of Man-

ners, but not with all the Effect deſired. The chief Cauſe whereof I apprehend to have been, that the Reformers had to deal with Sinners, whom long Habits had rendered incorrigible. They undertook to mend the Fruit of Trees that were radically corrupt. Whereas ours is a more rational Way of attaining to the ſame End, *viz.* by inſtilling good and religious Principles into the Minds of Children, whilſt they are free from bad Impreſſions: And theſe we juſtly hope will grow up with them, and be their Security againſt Drunkenneſs, Lewdneſs, and profane Swearing. Each of theſe young Ones is trained up to be hereafter in his proper Sphere a Reformer, and being all early liſted in the Cauſe of Virtue, they muſt ordinarily, at leaſt, prove Advocates for Morality, and zealous for the Honour of the Chriſtian Religion; the exact Knowledge and Practice whereof will ſo greatly diſtinguiſh them amongſt their own Rank of Life.

In ſhort the Deſign of theſe Charity Schools is ſo excellent, and the Effects of them

them have been viſibly ſo good, that a Chriſtian has Reaſons for ſupporting them, in what Light ſoever of that Kind he conſiders himſelf.

As a Member of the Univerſal Church, and a Believer at large, he cannot more effectually conſult or promote the Intereſt of revealed Religion, than by forwarding a Project which is the Envy of Infidels. And indeed it is high Time for the Friends of Chriſtianity, however differing about leſſer Matters, to unite in every honeſt Method of Defence againſt thoſe common Enemies. Tho' God knows the contrary to all this is apparently the Caſe: The Zeal of Men, in moſt of our Religious Diviſions, now chiefly employs itſelf about their diſtinct Notions, whilſt few appear ſeriouſly to have at Heart the Intereſt of our common Salvation.

Again, every Friend to the Chriſtian Religion, as it is taught and profeſſed in the Church of *England*, has a particular Call to promote the charitable Work before

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us. For the Children educated thereby, publickly profeſs their Faith and Judgment in Points of Religion in the Words of her Catechiſm; pray unto God, and praiſe him by her moſt excellent Forms, and are trained up, not in a bigotted, but rational Affection for her Communion, ſuch as will be moſt likely to preſerve them to their Lives End from going off either to Popery, or any of our home Separations. But as the prime Glory of a Church conſiſts in the good Morals and holy Lives of its Members; ſo thoſe who wiſh well to our eſtabliſhed Religion, cannot more effectually convince the World that they do ſo, than by giving all due Encouragement to the preſent Undertaking. It being the main View of thoſe, who direct and recommend it, to reſcue ſo many innocent Creatures from vicious Courſes, and to make them Ornaments to the Church of *England*, who would otherwiſe have proved its Diſgrace.

In ſo worthy an Affair therefore as this, let no one ſtand out from a Diſlike to ſome particular

particular Methods of conducting: For Defects there will be in all Schemes, ſo long as they are contrived and executed by human Hands. But ſtill, wiſe and thinking Men embark in them as oft as they ſee a Likelihood of Good ariſing therefrom, be it more or leſs. Indeed the very Appearance of a Body of Men acting as our Truſtees do, with diſintereſted Views, and aiming only at the Increaſe of God's Glory, and the Good of Men's Souls, does Credit to the Cauſe of Religion: It keeps up the Eſteem of the Chriſtian Profeſſion in a looſe and libertine Age, when it is obſerved, that all its Members ſeek not their own, but that many are concerned for the Things that are Jeſus Chriſt's.

Oh therefore, in order to do ſome certain and much probable Good, ſtrengthen the Hands of thoſe who labour in this Work of the Lord. What Proportion ſhould be obſerved herein, muſt be left to every Man's Prudence, and to the Workings of God's bleſſed Spirit within him. Only remember that it holds an unerring Maxim

Maxim in the Huſbandry of Grace, as well as in that of Nature; he that ſoweth little ſhall reap little, and he that ſoweth plenteouſly ſhall reap plenteouſly.

F I N I S.

Emendations in the Second Volume.

Page 83. *line* 20. *read* give. *p.* 123. *l.* 4. *r.* *Quirinus* was made. *p.* 201. *l.* 19. *r.* represent. *p.* 209. *l.* 17. *r.* World. *p.* 220. *l.* 9. *dele* as built. *p.* 237. *l.* 14. *r.* the Father. *p.* 266. *l.* 3. *dele* at. *r.* personal. *p.* 268. *l.* 9. *r.* whether. *p.* 304. *l.* 8. *r.* συγκληρονόμοι.